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A MODERN QUIXOTE

BY

MRS. J. KENT SPENDER

AUTHOR OF "MR. NOBODY," "PARTED LIVES," "RECOLLECTIONS OF
A COUNTRY DOCTOR," "LADY HAZLETON'S CONFESSION"
"A WAKING," "A STRANGE TEMPTATION"
ETC., ETC.

"Goodness admits of no excess, but error"

—Lord Bacon

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P R E F A C E.

As this is probably the last three-volume novel I shall ever write, I think it better to explain that it was in a publisher's hands very early in the present year, and would have been published in the Spring had not ill health and other causes determined me to delay the publication till the Autumn.

It was only to be expected that other books treating of the same questions should have appeared meanwhile; for it would be strange if many studies were not attempted at the same time of the problem presented by "the extension of wealth, the multiplication of luxuries, the increase of wants following therefrom—of wants, every one of which is as one of the threads which would separately break, but which, in their aggregate, bound Gulliver to earth". It is because we realise

Gulliver 21/a55 lines = 31
2/30/50

that “this is the subtle process which, more and more, from day to day, is weighing the scale charged with the things seen, as against the scale whose ethereal burden lies in the things unseen,” that we sympathise with the efforts—sometimes blundering and mistaken, but more or less heroic, made by young men and women, every day, to cut the threads and escape from such bondage.

August 6, 1894.

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A MODERN QUIXOTE.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

ON TOWER HILL.

IT was magnificent August weather, and it goes without saying that nobody was in town. The smart people were either yachting, travelling far afield, or resting in their country houses after the fatigues of the London season. Everybody who had the least pretence to be a Somebody was re-creating. Some were watching the light glittering on the snowy crests of Swiss or Italian Alps ; some were glancing at the torrents foaming amid the rugged clefts of the mountains in Scotland ; and others admiring the rich tints of Norwegian fjords, round which the pine forests grew shaggy and dark. The fashionable English watering-places were all

overcrowded ; the locomotives and steamers all hard at work. If you could not afford to go away you had to pretend that you could. To be whirled with the rapidity of lightning from hamlet to city, and from forest to picture-gallery or cathedral, was the best way to prove that you were a Somebody who could avail yourself of all the resources provided by Art and Nature simply for your amusement.

It mattered little that the Nobodies stayed at home ; for the Nobodies had no right to complain of being bored. In this case Nobody was a noun of multitude—the few millions more or less of toiling and suffering human beings packed together in this huge monster of London, growing like a great ant-hill by constant accretion of the little Nobodies, with their longings, their fears, their heartburnings, their tragedies, their dulnesses and their discontent.

Now and then it was almost to be expected that there should be a tiny rift in the gigantic ant-hill, causing an unwonted commotion amongst the innumerable restless beings hurrying from their cells

in the ants' nest in their anxiety to build it up again with the best advantage to themselves.

One of those rifts had just taken place. In fact, it was rather more important than usual. It was even attracting the attention of the Somebodies who were enjoying themselves in foreign hotels. For the burning rays of the August sun were beating down on the open space at the top of Tower Hill and upon the earnest upturned faces of a crowd as motley and as eager as that which had been gathered there when Wat Tyler pitched his camp as the leader of a forlorn hope. A man was addressing the crowd, with thousands of eyes fastened upon him, and with coarse and grimy hands held up at his proposals, some of them deformed and maimed with labour.

The man had keen eyes, broad forehead and a short beard; he was no leader of a forlorn hope, but a skilled mechanic, who, by his marvellous power over the masses, his native oratory, and his power of organisation, had shown himself capable

of being able to discipline and drill a hungry army of a hundred thousand men on strike, some of whom had been fighting but a short time before like wild beasts at the dock-gates, each treading down his brother.

His voice was ringing out :—

“When I come down to the East end of London six weeks or two months after this strike is over, I want to see cleaner and brighter homes than I find to-day. I shall hope to see your wives and children cleaner in person and better dressed than they are now ; and, what is more, I want to see, when this strike is finished, some evidence of the fact that it has personally influenced you as men for the better. I want to see some of your wives bear less evidence on their faces and bodies of your brutal ill-treatment. I want this strike, which has been nobly fought, and will, I believe, be nobly won, to make a turning-point in the life of the ignorant man, and I want him to be better educated to-morrow than he is to-day.”

Some of the men grinned and looked down ; others cheered vociferously. For all the various strata of labour were represented in the crowd, from the “royals” who had been undistressed by failure of employment, to the lowest of all ;—not only the lightermen but the tramps from the casual wards, the timber porters and the “toe-rags,” the drift of all trades and the despair of the social reformers. A few of them had keen, intelligent faces, but amongst them were types as barbarous as those to be found at anthropological museums—men with bent backs, short legs, prematurely wrinkled foreheads and craning necks.

Few outsiders had ventured to follow the crowd ; but one of them standing in the outskirts of it—a man of about sixty, broad-shouldered and bull-necked, with his hat drawn a little over his brows—swore softly to himself at what he considered to be the hypocritical misstatements of the demagogue.

“Humph!” he said to himself. “The fellow knows how to curry favour with the better sort of

people. A lot of those newspaper chaps are sure to be about to report all he says in the evening papers, and he panders to them."

Nothing which any one could have said would have been likely to interfere with Thomas Colville's pessimistic conclusion that the country was going to rack and ruin, and that men who could combine against their masters were "unmitigated brutes," making war upon society. That he himself was a Somebody, and belonged to the class of successful masters, might have been inferred from the substantial broadcloth which encased his ample frame; though some of his admiring friends could have explained that he had been seldom known to take a holiday, or to get away from his responsibilities for more than a few days at a time.

There was no fear of his being carried away by that tide of enthusiasm which is often found to be so irresistible in crowds; and his ire only waxed greater as the next "Socialist spouter" retailed the grievances of the strikers, "so miserably clad

that they had scarcely a boot for their feet, and so hungry that they had not a bit of food for their empty stomachs".

"And serve them jolly well right!" growled the indignant merchant, biting his lips, as the speaker enlarged on the public sympathy which had taken the practical form of helping them in their sufferings—the heavy supplies that had come from the English trades unionists and other sympathisers across the Atlantic. "More fools they—traitors to their country!" he muttered, with all the prejudice of the ordinary middle-class Britisher who feels the danger of running counter to recognised laws of gravity.

"All the worse for the universities," he thought in the despairing mood, as it was further explained how men of the executive, men who were dominant spirits—some of them educated at the English universities, and others trained in statesmanlike craft—had given up their time and even their

necessary sleep to the systematic distribution of the food supplies.

“Keep up your hearts—the kids ’ll not be forgotten !” shouted the far-reaching voice.

The crowd cheered wildly. But the looker-on shook his head. He did not wish any special evil to befall the little ones; but it seemed to be a dangerous experiment to interfere with natural laws, such as the law of the sins of the fathers being visited on the children. It was like disobeying one of the most fundamental and universal principles. “A nice state of things!” he reflected. “Here’s the beginning of the end ! Why, the port of London, which ought to be the emporium of the world, with all its crowded shipping stretching for miles off towards the sea, is blocked by the restless daring and insane insolence of these fellows !”

He sighed, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, as he remembered that the downfall of England would not only be inevitable but would

come quickly if trade were to be banished from the kingdom in this reckless fashion. It was enough to make him desperate, to recall the fact that the warehouses and quays were deserted and silent as if smitten with the plague—the tiny coaster and the great ocean steamer unladen, the cranes idle, and the picturesque crafts blocking the Thames waterway. Not only was the trade paralysed, but such a good time was being lost. No dead east wind was blowing, so that little could be done in the teeth of it, and there was no frost entailing a weary waiting at the gates.

This nonsensical strike had not only taken the world by surprise, but it would be the pioneer of other strikes,—of murder, of arson, and of stormy debates in the good old country between employer and employed—debates which were already turning the eyes of Europe upon them.

Thomas Colville groaned and turned his shirt collar higher, that he should not be recognised. When he had first heard of the opening of this

strike and had resented it, as one of the symptoms showing itself everywhere in internecine and ridiculous warfare, he had argued that the masters would have to put it down with an iron hand, and teach the men a lesson they should not easily forget. But now it seemed that the masters were yielding like men of straw, that processions were tolerated in the city, that new recruits—stevedores, lightermen, and porters—had been added to the numbers of the older strikers, till in a little while the whole place would be affected by these malcontents. It was as if he already saw the New Zealander seated on Westminster Bridge.

He could get no consistent or coherent account of what had happened. The first speaker and his coadjutor (who was said to have worked once in the buttons of a page boy) prided themselves in giving a voice to the inarticulate; but Thomas Colville had no sympathy with the inarticulate. He left that sort of thing to his young half-brother, whom he had educated at Oxford, and whom he

intended to endow with the fortune for which he had worked. He had a great admiration for this half-brother, who was nearly forty years younger than himself, and whose mother had prided herself on her old descent. He handled him like a delicate piece of china, which had been partly of his own manufacture ; and though the younger man was just now passing through a stage of that “mealy-mouthed” philanthropy which the older Colville looked upon as an aristocratic complaint, he comforted himself by considering that it was as necessary an epidemic of fashionable life as a form of measles or scarlet fever.

Thomas Colville was of only middle height, though there was something so erect and powerful in his stalwart frame that nobody would have called him short.

Had he been an inch or two taller, or had his eyesight been more keen, he would have seen that his brother, who towered above him head and shoulders, was conspicuous amongst the little

band of helpers who stood near the speakers, and who were moving about among the dockers.

Norman Colville was one of those who had been working "all round the clock," busy in distributing the stores. He knew how prevalent was the distress, how the little articles of furniture had been disappearing day by day, how the women and children had been growing paler and paler, and there had been constantly before him a ghastly vision of possible rioting and bloodshed. No wonder that the young fellow was looking thin and worn out, in spite of possessing the form of an athlete, thanks to the football and boating which had prevented him from being too much bent over his books. He would have cared little had he known that the women called him handsome, and would probably have laughed at it—the stamp of intellect which was undeniable on his face being not always consistent with beauty of feature. He looked older than his age, and his hair was already thinning at the temples. But the form of the head

was well proportioned—the development of the frontal bones indicating the strength of the imaginative as well as the intellectual faculties, while the bar of Michael Angelo ran up between the eyes. There was something about his sympathy which, in the common cant of the day, might be called electrical, especially when it was exercised on elemental forces, and communicated itself, as it did now, to these sons of the soil.

He attracted working men, and knew that he did, partly because his was not a mere access of pity for the sufferings of what some people call the "lower classes," but a desire to be amongst them, to feel as they did, to be stirred as they were stirred. The scene before him did not move him as a strange dramatic play but as a thing of which he was a part, with a sense of brotherhood. He did not come, as most of the journalists did, to seek for tips for a paper, but with a desire to lose sight of himself and all his own petty trials in the woes of those who had suffered more than he was ever likely to suffer.

“The rays of light are piercing the darkness,

It's coming yet for a' that,
That man to man the world o'er
Shall brothers be for a' that,”

he hummed to himself, more or less conscious of his own energetic vitality ready to act on other vitalities, and of his power of influencing whole groups of his fellow-men. He detracted from himself in disavowing this power, and had laughed a little scornfully when he had been told that his was the gift of personal magnetism.

“That is all rot—a modern sort of cant,” he had answered as he laughed. “*Jones* may possess it, but I do not. *Jones* has only to raise his voice and the ninepins go down before him—all the more reason he should keep a curb over that supposed ‘magnetism’ of his, lest its voluntary exercise should degenerate into demagogism.”

“Fanaticism is contagious,” he reminded himself, trying to quell the dizzy excitement and the thrill

of strong emotion of which he was more or less conscious in times like these. He was not aware of struggling with all his force against an invincible and mysterious influence—the concentrated soul of the crowd—striving to penetrate and dominate him ; till in the flux and reflux of ideas from brain to brain in all such collective assemblies of numerous individuals, the qualities of weighing and judging are often lost, and the will itself overpowered by the irresistible influence of stronger wills.

He only said jokingly that he wanted “to keep his head,” as he chose the more difficult part of the work—the administering of the funds which were accumulating for the benefit of the men on strike, scarcely conscious that he was throwing in some hundreds of the superabundant income which his elder brother allowed him. It was an opportunity for using up his store of energy. Never before had he had the sense of living so intensely. If there were any danger to health from the want of sleep and the overwork by day and night, or danger to his

prospects from the certainty of offending the brother who had set his mind on making him his heir, Norman Colville enjoyed the risk he was running, with some of the feeling of a man in battle who knows that a shot may come to him at any moment and may strike him anywhere, and whose curiosity about solving the great enigma has become all the keener from the knowledge that his soul may at any moment be hurled from his body.

“I am glad we had some plain speaking to-day about the wives and children,” said one of his Oxford friends—Jones from “Jesus”—whose experience of labour matters was also first-hand, as the crowd dispersed. “Too often a working man’s wife is merely the missus to look after the house, and to be blackened about the eye whenever he gets drunk. A fellow said to me the other day: ‘We take three Sundays about it—the first we squeezes, the second we kisses, and the third we goes to church’. You see they *must* marry when they are turned out of

their old homes. They must have some one to mend and cook for them, but as a rule they don't care much for their women."

"You expect too much of them," Colville remarked. "Even the old Greeks knew that as soon as a man had ensured a livelihood he would begin to practise morality, and not before." And they began to discuss together the old, old problems of higher wages and shorter hours, whilst Colville launched out into his favourite scheme for the better administration of the docks. From the docks they got to the importation of alien labour, the reform of the poor law, and many cognate subjects. Thomas Colville, who had made most of his money in iron works, whose creed was, "The higher the wages the worse the workman," and who had a permanent quarrel with the sentimental philanthropy which kept the unfit alive, would have been complimented if he could have known how many of the other men who had given in to the ridiculous craze of residing at the East end

were apt to defer to his young brother on questions of this sort.

For Norman Colville was not the sort of man from whom anybody could hold aloof. If, on the one hand, he had the habit of meeting working men on his own level without seeming to stoop to any of them ; on the other hand, men of older descent were soon on terms of comradeship with him, partly from that obliviousness on his part of all social distinctions which prevented him from courting them, partly because he had been the richest man in his college, and able to entertain on a lavish scale, and partly because his manners were so winning and self-forgetful that you could pursue no middle course concerning him. You had either not to know him, or to find that knowing him meant liking him.

CHAPTER II.

A LETTER FROM A BROTHER.

THOMAS COLVILLE had been carried away by the rush of the crowd. He had always prided himself on never spying on his brother, for whose accomplishments he had considerable respect, though he thought him very foolish in the ordinary affairs of life. But it had been a question of *sauve qui peut* when the dockers made off for the distribution of the stores at the relief *dépôt*.

Had Mr. Colville been able to follow to see how this part of the affair was managed, he would have recognised with some surprise that Norman and his allies could show themselves to be both quick and businesslike in details which were not abstract mysteries, but required the smartest colloquial and promptest business faculties.

He thought himself fortunate to escape with no broken bones, and congratulated himself on his fore-thought in having divested himself of his diamond ring as well as his watch and massive gold chain as he made for his brother's lodgings, having taken the precaution of providing himself with the address.

The lodgings were only temporary, but a sight of them disgusted him for more reasons than one. For the room in which the young fellow had chosen to pass a considerable portion of his time during these hot summer days illustrated in a provoking way his various crazes. It had seemed to Thomas Colville almost vulgar that this lad—so expensively educated, and sent to Oxford with a view to spending money and making important friends—should contend that there was beauty of a peculiar sort in the Thames, and especially between Hammersmith Bridge and Kew, where the Cockney Sunday pleasure-seekers could find their beloved tea-gardens. Whew!—the very thought

of those pleasure-seekers packed like sardines in the broiling steamers, which were apt to wheeze as if they had diseases in their lungs, filled the older man with horror. He and Norman had often squabbled about it—the latter talking nonsense about Art, and praising the groups of sails and even the boats about Battersea, such as the dying eyes of Turner looked at.

As if Art could be found in the wharves and timber grounds,—and in the strange conglomeration of architecture, the tall Jacobean houses with remnants of departed grandeur elbowing the squalid taverns! Or as if there could be any need for the young fellow to paint pictures when he could afford to turn patron and buy the best things in that line! It was fine enough to hear him talk of Cotmans and De Wints, Girtins and Paul Sandbys, Constables, Corôts and David Coxes. But to think of painting these things himself! It was nearly as great a mistake for him to dabble with painting as it was for him to go in

for what Thomas Colville considered to be ranting Socialism.

It spoilt the dream of the elder brother's life, which was a kind and fairly unselfish one. He had a genius for economy, and had saved most of his income, adding to his capital year by year, and though he had not married he intended to found a family by handing it down to his half-brother and ensuring some sort of success for those who bore his name. The lad's mother had been kind to him, and he had a strong affection for him.

He blamed himself for having been so absorbed in his own industry that he had not made many inquiries about the young man till he heard that Norman was consorting with "painter fellows". He was not surprised to find that the rooms which his brother had taken commanded views of the river, beautiful in its foulness even here, with iridescent scum covering the oily surface of the dark waters. One of the young fellow's paintings stood unfinished on the easel. Colville turned it

upside down, and thought it looked rather better in that position. He remembered as he looked at it that he had read something in the newspapers about the young English daubers who were imitating the French Impressionist school; and, like most men of his class, he had a horror of everything French.

"Humph!" said the would-be critic to himself. "I wonder how the lad thinks this sort of rubbish would sell. It would bring him to his senses to be forced to find the best market for his goods." (This was *à propos* of a hint which the younger brother had already ventured to throw out when words had run high between them on the subject of this mania.)

Thomas retreated a few steps, and burst into a loud guffaw. For the landscape looked to him more like a dirty palette on which the colours had been squeezed directly from oil tubes. Shipping was supposed to be there; but to the elder Colville's untrained eye the rigging of the ships looked all

awry. If there was a subtle charm in the masts looming in a ghostly way through the mists he could not see it. He rubbed his hands with glee. "And the boy talks, when you stroke his fur the wrong way, of the possibility of getting his living by selling such trash as this! Ha! ha! It is the fine talk of the day that men of all sorts are to get their own living, and that others are no longer to be ground down in the labour market! 'Ground down,'—that's the way he puts it. He's a fine fellow, but a little wee bit mistaken just at present about most things. He shouldn't rush at things like that. Why be in such precious haste?"

And then pulling himself up as if his brother had been present and could have heard what he said, he drew a blotting-case towards him which lay on the writing-table, and sat down to write a letter.

He knew from past experience that it was difficult to have tact when you are in a rage with

young people ; and as this young man was the only being in the world for whom he cared, and he was not inclined to indulge in the luxury of matrimony himself or to form any other ties for his old age, he did not wish to come into collision with him. He meant to keep his hold over him ; and was certainly backed up by the consciousness of that wealth which he believed to be all-powerful in levelling hills and exalting valleys. And yet more than once this young Utopian had dared to hint that he did not care for his money ! If Norman came into the room at this moment Thomas felt that he would probably address him in freezing tones, if he did not openly storm at him for his "goings-on". He knew that it would be impossible for him just at that moment to take into his strong grasp the hand that had been pauperising the people. Once before he had been coolly informed that pauperising and subsidising were different things, and had been reminded that he was not forbidden to give presents to persons of his own class. Such argu-

ments made him irate ; he prided himself on being a man of common-sense.

And yet he did not want matters to come to a crisis. On another occasion, when he had loaded his brother with luxurious knicknacks, he had had more than a suspicion that the young fellow was beginning to tire of such gimcracks. If a life of luxury palled upon him, nauseated and sickened him, he must attract him in some other way. His desire to found a family through his next of kin seemed to him to be rather a fine thing. He had read enough to know that it had been Sir Walter Scott's ambition, and that of many other great men before him. But he must proceed very carefully not to fail in that object.

He sat down and wrote :—

“ MY DEAR BOY,—I saw you to-day making a fool of yourself amongst others who were bigger fools than yourself. I don't reproach you. It's only the modern way of sowing wild oats, though it seems to me a deuced queer way.

"The old-fashioned way of the young bloods might be more wicked, but it was not so irritating or so priggish. I would almost rather have heard that you were a gay Lothario about town [the word was smudged as if to hide that the writer was not quite clear about the spelling till the consequence was that it looked like Lutheran] than have you kicking up your heels in this idiotic fashion. Do you know that whilst you are hiding yourself in this precious nasty hole your invitations and a lot of other letters are lying about unopened at your other lodgings at Manvers Street? You must have forgotten to tell them to forward them to you. Extravagant young dog! to have two sets of lodgings and two land-ladies to look after you! But when did I ever complain of your extravagance? Had I been your father—a much more natural relationship than this of ours, which came from a marriage contracted when a man was old enough to be a grandfather—I should doubtless have jawed you about extravagance. But as it is you score every way—I seldom

interfere. Only when you waste your opportunities I am bound to tell you and to remonstrate. Amongst the neglected letters I found two or three from Lady Caterlot. I shall look uncommonly foolish next time I meet Sir Francis. He has spoken to me in a most obliging way about you, and seems to be deeply interested in your future prospects. Between ourselves that's to be expected. He is no end of a good chap, though every one knows that he is decidedly poor, and neither he nor the lovely Irene can afford to look down on the £4000 a year which I mean to give you when you marry.

"Go in and win, my boy ! If you marry as I wish I shan't grudge you anything. Sir Francis has tried in a sort of way to make me understand that he sees the signs of a flirtation between you and his girl, and that on the whole he is not unfavourable to it.

"He is inclined to make allowances in your case for the Radicalism which is so beastly ridiculous in

most young men. He laughs good-humouredly about it. ‘It’s a good thing I’m not a peer,’ says he, ‘or he’d be in a mighty hurry to clip my feathers.’ And then he adds that on the whole you are an excellent young fellow, and he hears that you were well spoken of at Oxford.

“It’s as plain as a pikestaff that he and Lady Caterlot are inclined to make advances to you. Well, and why not? Blood must meet blood, and flop down on its knees in days like these. Sir Francis has one of the oldest baronetcies in the kingdom. It is said that he refused a peerage—that accounts for his readiness to jibe at the peers. I don’t wonder he refused to have anything to do with your mushroom peers, but he’s as hard up as a rat in a hole. And if his girl is gone on you, why not accept their invitation to their place at Maidenhead? You will have boating there to your heart’s content. There’s to be a little dance among the people in the neighbourhood soon, and you are asked to it. I’m sure I may congratulate you;

for the fair Irene's portrait has figured amongst the beauties in the shop windows. They often chatter about her in the society papers. Don't be afraid that I shall interfere with you—I know how to keep out of the way till I'm wanted. When the marriage is a 'fate accomplished,' and you come to me for the money, I shall know how to fork out.

"Write to them post-haste, and say you will go to their dance, and have done once for all with these discreditable ways.

"Your long-suffering brother,

"THOMAS COLVILLE."

At the time when the older man was scribbling this letter, rather satisfied than otherwise with the clearness of his composition, Norman Colville was sitting in a little room nursing a sick child. The boy had cried to come to him, had been taken folded in a blanket from his bed, and was now resting in his arms, his head supported against Colville's shoulder.

"He had such a way with him," as the admiring

mother said, that the “little uns all took to him”; and to tell the truth, he was himself so weary from want of sleep that had it not been for the stifling atmosphere of the sick room, he would gladly have stayed there as long as the child, fractious with suffering, required. The problem of the children multiplying in our great towns, with only the fittest surviving by toughness of constitution, was one that preyed upon his mind.

When would it be solved?

When will that be ?
Cried the bells of Dundee,

rang absurdly in Colville’s brain as he stroked the little fellow’s hair and rocked him in his arms. He was always tender in his indulgence to those whom he considered to be weak and down-trodden ; and his friends had sometimes laughed at him for the excited way in which he declared that the children were often fed on garbage too wretched to be flung to dogs, and that it riled him to think of

the way in which the police told them to move on. Ibsen's idea of bringing up every child as if he were a nobleman and of serving his meals in rooms surrounded with beautiful pictures and enlivened with beautiful music, was much more to his taste.

The missus stood watching him admiringly ; she was a woman of greater intelligence than most of her slave-driven sisters, though—looking at her and pitying her—he considered, in his exaggerated way, that it was the hardest problem of all for women of her type to be forced to submit for the greater part of their lives to a serfdom more cruel than that which existed at the time of the Conquest.

“ There is the differences in the men, which makes it hardest,” she said, as she stood with arms akimbo. “ Some has to sacrifice themselves for lazy brutes, whilst others —”

He found it a little difficult to explain to the eager wife that though it was true that the men differed so widely, that the industrious ones were ready to work themselves to the bone for the sake

of their wives and children, while others were as ready to hang about like rag-bundles and do as little work as they could for the shortest number of hours,—yet, at a period like this, all must fare alike.

The child was now “beautiful asleep,” as the bewildered mother said. He put it down gently, as he went on with the relief distribution, telling himself that he was another sort of Bumble, unable to shirk the difficulty of enforcing some form of oppression upon these wretches. He was haunted by the woman’s puzzled face, and wished more than ever that it were possible to keep up the old kindly relations which used to exist between the possessors of capital and labour. It was wonderful what a touch of enthusiasm could do amongst the men, but it was the women who were the real hindrances to combination.

As he entered the next house where a newly married couple lived, he was greeted by the young wife’s hysterical shrieks.

"It's all along o' her new 'at with the ostrich feathers and the plush jacket as I giv her. We was bound to put it in pawn," explained the young husband, who was holding her jerking legs, "and now she is in her tantrums I can't go agen the masters."

Her face, fresh with a doll-like prettiness, was wet with tears making channels down her cheeks, her nose was red, and her eyes bleared. The love which had lasted for the few short weeks of courtship was so worn-out by the "tantrums" that Bill Simmons suggested giving a box on the ear to quiet her.

"Harguing ain't o' no use for such as they, as ain't been properly eddicated," he said with an air of superior authority, as Colville sat down quietly by her side and tried to make her understand that her husband was acting as he thought for the best, and that there were cases in life when present good must be forfeited for the sake of future benefit.

He had to encounter a fresh shock when he

entered a neighbouring house and found another woman on whom he had counted as one of the most sensible amongst the lot, the worse for drink, jigging about with her black hair loose to her waist, whilst she played a sort of cancan as an accompaniment to her wild dance on a tin sauce-pan, and raved in revolutionary balderdash. It was necessary to speak to her sternly, telling her that she had disqualified herself by her conduct from receiving any relief; but she was too drunk to understand, and her defiant oaths rang in his ears as he went out into the streets.

They were accompanied by another demoniac whisper, *Qu'avez-vous à faire dans cette galère?* In vain his philosophy told him that excesses of this sort were the inevitable accompaniments of all periods of excitement, and that an outbreak here and there was of course to be expected. The thought of the volcanic forces surging beneath the surface, and ready to vent themselves in social upheaval or in mad rebellion against God, haunted

him with a new fear—the responsibility of meddling. And he sighed as he remembered that a well-intentioned effort to extinguish a prairie fire might only end in spreading the flames.

He was somewhat out of tune with himself and everything else when he turned a few steps out of his way to say some cheering words to an old man whom he had found in the preceding winter uncomplaining but starving in a cellar, with a lump of coal for his pillow, and lying on damp flags, rather than be persuaded to take refuge in the workhouse, which would have been worse to him than penal servitude. He might have told the old fellow that he was a fool for his pains; but, as it was, he not only helped him, but let the case turn his thoughts to the question of pensions for old age. The two were firm friends. It was not simply the material help that Norman Colville had imparted. It was something more—the belief in human kind, and salvation from the despair which had been eating

like rottenness into the old man's soul worse than hunger into his bones.

It did him good to have these few words with old George Hitchings, and to tell him all about the other men who had once been his fellow-workers; yet, as he bent his steps towards his lodgings, the sense of fatigue returned, and with it the depression. The atmosphere was close and unhealthy, the narrow streets steamy and reeking with odours.

The insistent summer air seemed pitiless,
Shining in all the barren crevices of weary life.

"I can admire the curates and sisters and the Toynbee Hall fellows who live and work here; but I should soon grow wretched and useless in this dreadful, dingy, sooty, foggy old London myself," he thought in his fit of low spirits, "and I should be bothered by scruples. I can well believe what the doctors tell us—that the pure Cockney dies off in the third generation." It seemed to him as if Death must come as a merciful relief to "poor

chaps" compelled to live oppressed and brutalised by indiscriminate housing.

It did not enliven him when he sat down in his little room overlooking the river to be confronted with his brother's letter. The colour rushed into his cheeks as he read it, and in spite of the late hour and his own exhaustion he felt he should have no sleep till he had answered it.

" You are quite mistaken," he wrote emulating his brother's plain vernacular, " if you think there was ever anything between myself and Miss Caterlot. She is good-looking enough and is much admired ; but I should be behaving like a cad if I concluded that because she is fairly polite she has any particular fancy for me.

" The best way to set such a misconception right —as I have not the faintest idea of getting married just yet—will be to accept Lady Caterlot's invitation to the dance, and show myself in my proper colours. I do not propose to stay at Allston Lodge for more than a single night, as I am so worn out with the

work of the last fortnight that I think of going to the Highlands by-and-by to recruit. Perhaps you will come with me? Will you make one trifling concession to me—not to make so free with the name of any lady? I have a particular objection to these speculations on the subject of my marriage. And were I selfish enough to view it only in a personal light I should not like my name to be entangled with that of any woman in jokes of that sort. You are wrong, I assure you,—altogether wrong. But as I have no desire to quarrel, and have every reason to be grateful to you, I sign myself,

“Yours ever,

“NORMAN COLVILLE.

“P.S.—May I trust you not to talk anymore about ‘hard cash,’ ‘good matches’ (meaning matches made for ‘position,’ as you would call it), and that sort of thing? You mean kindly, but it grates on me. I forgot to add that though I may go to

Allston Lodge for one night, as you wish it, I cannot leave my people here till all is settled. But I hope that will be soon."

CHAPTER III.

A DANCE AT MAIDENHEAD.

MEN do not work as Norman Colville had worked without feeling the strain of it for some time afterwards ; and he was still suffering from a feeling of depression, which was quite unusual with him, when early in the afternoon, a short time afterwards, he was driving across London to Paddington, in accordance with his promise to his brother.

The shop windows, with their brilliant display of goods, the autumn toilets and the jewellery, seemed to jar upon something in his nervous system in a way that was utterly unaccountable.

It began to dawn upon him that some change had taken place in his life, but he was too tired at present to be able to reason about it. Two things seemed pretty certain, but it was characteristic of

his mental condition that he was only able to recognise them in a dim sort of way. One of these things was that he and his half-brother must come to a speedy understanding about various matters ; another, that Jones was the hero, and much more likely to be of use in his generation than himself. Other matters were not clear to him yet. All his life he had had a faculty for seeing things in different lights as each in turn came uppermost, but he knew this could not last. Sooner or later these thoughts must sort themselves—one set of them must come uppermost.

Hitherto his existence had been spent in incessant hurry, with little time to think. His life at Oxford had been an exciting one ; and the year or two spent in London (during which he had often kept on lodgings both at the East and the West—money being of no importance, as his brother had often told him) had been more exciting still.

He had tried to combine many things in deference to his own tastes and those of his elder

brother. Politics, committees, fashionable life, had each in turn absorbed him, leaving little opportunity for thought about his future. He had been very reticent about his own sensations, partly because he did not like to worry or disappoint his brother.

“He has centred all his hopes on me, and I must try to carry out his ideas,” he had said to himself, when he refrained from telling the retired iron merchant that he had thought a lot of people in this London society—women as well as men—were provokingly vulgar and self-conscious. Society had certainly not impressed him as his brother had intended it to do ; on the contrary, it had alternately surprised, amused, and scandalised him.

“It was different when I was quite a boy,” he found himself thinking as he leant back in the corner of the first-class carriage which was to whirl him on to Maidenhead. “One thought then of nothing but taking in new impressions.” The mere enjoyment in rowing, football and cricket had at one time been sufficient for him. But now

the horizons were widening. He could no longer be content with merely hearing, seeing, feeling and watching the work of others. The preliminary period had indeed been past for some time, and inaction had become hateful to him; but the instinct to try his powers in some independent fashion was comparatively new, and no longer to be withheld.

He accused himself of having been childishly slow in development, treating life like a fairy tale, when he ought to have been up and doing.

The sweets had lost their taste, and palled upon his palate. It was surprising how he had lost his interest in fashionable life. As he took out his paper knife and cut *Truth* and *Modern Society*, reading that the season had been an unusually brilliant one, he tossed them away from him in vexation.

He did not think that the season had been a brilliant one at all; on the contrary, it had been atrociously dull, in spite of all the greater and

lesser stars who had played upon lute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and the yards of canvas which had been hung upon the walls of the picture exhibitions.

What did they call “brilliant”?—the dinner tables decorated with orchids at a guinea a piece, when men and women were starving? or the finery manufactured into ball dresses by anæmic girls who were sweated far into the night, that other girls might be decked out for the matrimonial market?

He laughed at his own pessimistic thoughts. Why couldn't he be like other men, and take the goods which the gods provided for him, contented with his own unruffled existence? He was never idle, and it was rather far-fetched to take himself to task as if his brain were degenerating in the life which he had to lead to please his brother—spending a lot of his time in this artificial hot-house society—when, after all, it was only like the brains of other men who were continually straining

themselves to say sharp and clever things, with no proper leisure for any real self-culture.

He was grateful to the elder brother, who had hitherto borne so kindly with all his crazes, even when he had gone dead against his prejudices in insisting on providing himself with a second lodging in the East end of London. He wondered if Thomas would insist on his giving it up soon, when he would no longer have the excuse of taking part in these strikes, or whether his brother could be appeased by the excuse that it would be well for him to keep on rooms in which he could study the effects of cloud and fog on the river.

Sunshine was better for a change; and the sun was brilliant, though already westering, when he reached Allston Lodge. Daffodil tints were melting into the horizon, and the opal hues of the water—blending with the greens of the billowy foliage on the banks, and winding away like a riband in the distance—reminded him of the startling colour of some of the earlier Italian missals.

"It is not often that we see anything so gorgeous in England," he thought as he dressed for the dance. It was to take place on the lawn, where tents erected for the refreshments, ornamented with roses and fairy lights, and hung with Chinese lanterns, contrasted oddly with the grey trunks of solemn-looking old oak-trees, and the moss-stained boles of the beeches which had been carefully trimmed here and there to allow glimpses to be seen of far-off reaches of the Thames.

From the window of the bedroom that had been allotted to him and which was somewhat high in the Elizabethan part of the old house, he had a splendid view of the prospect; and, as he dressed himself mechanically, he could watch the delicate gradation of greens in the beautiful woods which made a background to the lawn, melting into the pearly greys of twilight till the whole was swallowed up in a velvety semi-darkness. Then the moon—taking the place of that play of sunbeams that had hardly ceased during the day—shone with

her feebler rays on the miracle of that multitudinous leafage, on the river, turning it into silver threads, and on the tent erected for the dancers on the lawn, adorned with coloured lamps as if with fireflies.

“ It is a beautiful old place. I don’t wonder Sir Francis is unwilling to part with it, though they say he is head over ears in debt ; and after all it’s only a question of time. Places like this must come to the hammer. If only something could be done to turn them into parks for the people ! ” said the young Radical to himself as he looked at his watch and saw that it was time for the dancing to begin. Even then he could not help thinking that it was nonsense for the Caterlots to give dances at all ; though this little scratch affair out of the season would doubtless cost them very much less than an expensive ball at the expensive time in which the elect of society would have to vie with others of the elect more plentifully dowered than themselves with this world’s goods.

It seemed as if Lady Caterlot had been reading his thoughts ; for as she shook hands with him, standing in one of the tents amidst tall palms and bamboo chairs, she said, smiling graciously :—

“ You, Mr. Colville, *like* anything unconventional. I need not apologise to a man of sense like you for striking out an original line of my own. No; I must correct myself, it was Irene’s idea, and Irene is never hampered by prejudices. She said to me when we were in Berkeley Square : ‘ Don’t let us give a dance *now* when every one is tired out with these hot London crushes. If we give one at all, let it be a little one all to ourselves, with no pretension about it, and in the sweet open air. Most of the people who are worth anything don’t leave Maidenhead till September. If you go abroad in August you must sit down at the *table d’hôte* with your butcher and baker and candle-stick maker.’ ”

Colville wondered if he should remind her that he claimed affinity—on one side of his family at
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least—with “the butcher, baker and candle-stick maker”.

But on second thoughts he decided to let it drop, as Lady Caterlot continued : “So you see we still get the best people, and though the grass is worn by daylight—the sun has been so scorching this summer—you notice no defects by moonlight”.

It was true in more senses than one. The moonlight hid the defects in the lady’s face, softening the expression of it which by daylight was hard and cutting like the diamonds that glittered on her neck. Norman could not help asking himself why — if report spoke truly, and Sir Francis was really so much encumbered with debt —his wife did not sell her diamonds.

Diamonds, according to this unconventional young man, were not becoming to dowagers. It was possible that the dazzling precious stones might heighten the beauty of the triumphantly young and happy, whose eyes might outshine the diamonds. But fashion was inexorable in the

matter, and prevented the older women from knowing that these shining ornaments deprived their fading eyes of their remaining brightness, and seemed to glitter at them mockingly.

Yet Lady Caterlot was what is generally called a well-preserved woman, and was stately as she stood in the moonlight, wearing a rich brocade dress; and if she gave her hand, as Colville fancied, a little more coldly than usual to him, it was probably on account of the reason he had given her in his letter for not answering her previous invitation, and burying himself obstinately in the East end.

Lady Caterlot was the sort of person who would always take a front seat in life, debt or no debt. Her daughter Irene also belonged to the type of women who have the knack of making others feel small, and who pride themselves on wearing well. She was probably not so young as she looked, as she also stood in the moonlight, surrounded by the artificial fireflies, dressed in shimmering satin

covered with *chiffon*, and gave her hand almost as coldly as her mother had given hers before.

What did it matter? The touch of her hand, even when she had purposely let it linger in his grasp, had never made his pulses beat faster. Her attitude and even her little grimaces were generally studied. He was so accustomed to her modes of flirtation that he was not astonished when she said, as she glanced up at the vertical shadow on his brow :—

“ Mr. Colville, you are looking haggard. I am not surprised, for we know *all*—we have seen your name in the newspapers. It was awfully wicked of you, but you never thought how unhappy you were making *me*.”

She had thawed already, and made an ingenuous little slip. He took no notice of the slip, or of the dainty handkerchief which she held up to veil blushes which would scarcely have been seen in the dim mysterious light cast by Japanese lanterns and the rays of the moon ; for the art was not as

fine as usual,—the words did not correspond with the manner.

“ You must expect some of us to be unhappy about you,—I as well as the rest,” she added, trying to cover the *faux pas* which had been intended but had missed its mark.

“ Indeed, if we had not seen your name in the papers we should not have known what was going on,” she explained, as she stood up with him for the first dance which he had marked on her card ; “ but, of course, we always take an interest in our friends, and don’t like to be down upon them even when they make mistakes.”

“ It is the privilege of your class to be ignorant of such things. No one would think of reproaching you for it,” he could not help answering.

“ You are a little bitter,” she said with a shrug.

“ *You* would be a little bitter,” he rejoined, “ if you had seen all the horrors which *I* have seen lately. At any rate, I think too well of you to imagine you would decline to help.”

"You are like Dante," she laughed,—"the man who has been in hell."

And then as they rested after the first few turns of the waltz, she added: "Do you know you look as if you had been with Dante? you have added years to your life. There are positively wrinkles, do you know, wrinkles on your brow? Any one who cared for you must feel for you! And it is such a mistake to be going down to these clamouring people. Am *I* not a man and a brother? or a woman and a sister, if you like that expression better." She spoke unsteadily, as if she really cared about the change in him, in spite of her rallying words. Her eyes were large and pitying,—rounded like Giotto's O's; and as she stood looking at him in the mystic light, he could almost have fancied there were tears in them.

"To be a brother is a trifle," he tried to say carelessly; "grant to oneself luxury and ease, and grant to one's black brother the compensation of unlimited pumpkins."

He did not, of course, tell her that—eminently ridiculous as it was—another refrain seemed to ring in his ears like a nursery rhyme,—

How shall I laugh and sing and dance,
My very heart recoils,
While here to give my mirth a chance,
A hungry brother toils ?

It would be mawkish sentimentality to let such rhymes keep jiggling on in his head; and so he added aloud : “ These people are not black brothers, but they are still serfs—they must work or starve, and in some cases, as you know, they have been unable to get work. The ‘black brother’ with ‘unlimited pumpkins’ is in some respects a good deal better off. The slave was property—often valuable property ; it was to the interest of men, who were not too brutal, to take care of their slaves.”

“ It is so easy to impose upon *you* by all this rot. It is because you are so soft-hearted.” She said “rot” rather prettily, pursing up her lips in a childish

manner. But there was a flash of keener intelligence from her eyes as she spoke of the prodigiously rapid spread of thought through the cheap press which her father was always lamenting; and she looked fully her age as she added severely: "Such terribly destructive ideas are abroad now—one never knows what may come next. One would have thought that a man like you would have had too much originality to be led by the nose. But you are so very young."

Norman contented himself with smiling. He hated political discussions.

Then she changed her manner, and became again the winning coquette.

"If *I*, for instance, were to dress up as an indigent docker's wife, I should touch your soft heart and get anything out of you," she said slyly; "but in *our* society it is so difficult to get really to know each other."

Once more he was on his guard, and answered: "You are a trifle hard on me. The reason all this

seems such nonsense to you is because you don't use your imagination, and try to put yourself in the place of these outsiders. You are cultured, and culture teaches us to act to others as we wish them to act to us; the Christian scheme went a little further."

"Ah, yes, if I remember rightly, the Christians, like those who were martyred in the Coliseum, talked about loving each other, and dying for each other; but *that*, of course, is quite out of date. Christianity of that sort no longer exists; but it seems to me queer that you philanthropists, who pose for having independence of thought and consciences which you keep all to yourselves, should set your affections so entirely on folks of another class. Is *our* anxiety, *our* sympathy nothing to you?" she asked, with a little unsteady laugh. "Must one *really* disguise oneself in rags if one wishes to be recognised as belonging to your own flesh and blood?"

The fencing was becoming difficult; but he thought it wiser to keep on the defensive and dis-

claim the insinuation of posing as one of the few men who possessed consciences.

"That is really too unkind," he said. "It is pleasant to have a good opinion of oneself; and how will it be possible for me to keep up my self-respect if I am accused of 'posing' and laying claim to so terrible a thing as 'independent thought'? Why, you know, there is no such thing as independent thought."

His only hope was in copying her and taking refuge in banter, but he thought it wiser not to look at her.

He could not define the singular impression which her eyes were making upon him; but he knew her to be the sort of woman who tries to seize the exact instant for moving the emotions of a man, and who scarcely waits to think of consequences. In another moment he might be pushed into some unwise acknowledgment.

It would be safest to keep to the abstract, and he added simply: "Many of our motives are

degraded when we try to analyse them, and I have not the slightest reason for supposing that mine are any better than those of the rest. Still, if you had seen what I have seen during the last few weeks, you would admit that sympathy is greatly needed between all classes of human beings."

Her eyes suddenly flashed.

"Oh yes, we get a lot of this cant now—I know it almost by heart. I am tired of people proclaiming themselves to be overstrained workers—*you* look overstrained and unnatural with it—more's the pity!"

"You are paradoxical," he rejoined, laughing lightly. "Do you know I am not quite sure to which you refer—the real overstrained workers, is it *they* who are posing? Or is it *I* who have tried to ease a little of the burden of my indolence?"

"You had much better have let it alone. To meddle in these matters is only to increase the burdens," she said passionately.

"I tried to do my best. The best was but a very little—something absurdly small, no doubt ; but I must have some purpose in my life."

"I should think you had more in your life to satisfy you than the majority of men," she answered, softening and turning her eyes once more sympathetically upon him.

He could meet them now without being afraid of the tears in them. Those tears were probably, for some mysterious cause, which he could not fathom, more for herself than other people ; and though he felt rather sensitively for every one, and was ever chivalrous to women, he knew that she had no power at all over him now.

The flirtation to which his brother had alluded could no longer go on with no fuel to keep it up. The attraction, which had never been great, had long ago died a natural death.

He felt sure that it would be wise to pull up in the conversation ; and therefore when, impatient at his silence, she asked him suddenly, "What

can you want more than you already have in your life?" he reflected that though it seemed to him a strange question, it might be better to answer it readily. It might perhaps be a dangerous impulse to tell her of the resolution which was shaping itself in his mind; and yet he knew that it would be wiser to act upon it than to allow himself to be drawn any farther into one of those subtle conversations in which, at any moment, he might be thrown off his guard. Women of this sort could be careful to control their own language as soon as they discovered that they were going too far, but they would weigh all the words of the more slow-going and awkward man. They could turn round on him and laugh at him, like Viviens, when once he was thoroughly entrappcd.

There was nothing for the male creature like speaking out; and the resolution which, slowly unknown to himself, had been forming itself in Norman Colville's brain, took definite shape at that moment, in a manner which was destined to

change the whole course of his future life. He suddenly knew how weary he was of his own shifting changes of purpose, and of the fluctuations between idleness and activity, in which he had spent the years since he had left the university. He was sick of this dual existence, and determined to shake himself out of it, so as to have nothing more to do with indecisive indifference.

“What can I want more?” he repeated, looking the lady full in the face, speaking slowly and deliberately, as if what he was saying would not be terrible to her as well as to him. “I can answer you by telling you what I have as yet told nobody else. I have decided no longer to be dependent on my brother. I shall try to work for my own bread. I daresay that just in the beginning I shall not earn much more than I spend at present on cigars; but I mean to try.”

“What an awful conclusion!” she cried, with a cynical laugh, which sounded a little hysterical. “It has the merit of being quite melodramatic and

picturesque, like certain impossible stories ; but I fear it will be scarcely feasible. You are copying these foolish journeymen in falling foul of your tools."

And she laughed the more loudly to cover her sudden surprise.

" You mean that it reflects on my judgment ? "

" And also on your good taste. But that is your affair, not mine."

She could be very sarcastic, and did not hesitate to try her sarcasm on him in her present discomfiture. He tried to explain that to be rich was to be deprived of a stimulating influence to exertion ; but the shade of flirtation had disappeared in her manner, and he bit his lips as she responded sharply :—

" You must have singular confidence in your own powers ".

" Quite the contrary," he said. " Excuse me. I did not mean to moralise. But it is the lagging horse that needs the spur."

Her eyes were a little veiled.

“Wait before you decide anything definite,” she added in softer tones, sitting down in one of the flower-scented tents, and motioning to him to take a seat by her side. “What you purpose to do is humiliating, and will cut you off from most of your friends. Why, you would reduce yourself to a ridiculous Nirvana of self-effacement!”

He smiled. Her speech was very plain, and, in spite of her better intentions, it cut like a whip, but it could leave no unpleasant memory behind. He had never cared enough about her to attach importance to what she said.

“I know I shall be separated from all of you by an insuperable barrier,” he added, with the same smile.

“And yet you do not care?” It was her turn to bite her lips. “You are a very extraordinary man.”

A slight colour tinged her usually pale cheeks. They were sitting beneath the lanterns, but he did not notice it.

“I must disclaim that compliment. I have never

been extraordinary ; but I consider that what I am doing should make me respectable."

"It makes you ridiculous," she retorted quickly.

"Everything is ridiculous if you look upon it as absurd ; the world always stares and laughs at anything unaccustomed."

"That is the attraction of it to *you*," she answered again, with sudden passion. "Some people like to be stared at, and pointed at, for the sake of being out of the common ; and the sort of work you have taken up will get you into notice, though it *is* hackneyed and copied from the popular hero—more like a fool—in stories."

She spoke rudely, and he winced.

"I did not tell you that I meant to take up an East end life. I am afraid that would be scarcely the sort of life for me. But I have reasons for wishing to get my own living. In determining to be independent I believe that I shall be carrying out my best instincts. It is scarcely likely to make me an egotist—rather the contrary."

"It is sheer madness," she murmured. "All fanaticism is absurd."

"It is prejudice to call it fanaticism; work is the law of life, as much for me as it is for the working man."

"You will soon have enough of sharing their toil," she answered, with another burst of harsh cynical laughter. "You may like it for a little while, because it will be a new form of amusement to you—it will be no self-sacrifice to you. *I* take pleasure in other ways. Self-abnegation is horrible to me. All this about sacrifice and self-denial has made the world ugly; but you are right in saying that with *you* it would be another form of selfishness."

She was in a mood to be cruel, but he took no notice of her cruelty.

It is the fashion to write of the end-of-the-age young man or woman as if they are given over to frivolities; but the undeniable existence of one type presupposes its opposite. It is absurd to conclude that the self-absorbed worldly-minded woman

said to be the outcome of the civilisation of the nineteenth century (but in reality the product of every luxurious age) and surrounded by the men which such women attract, is the culminating type. Another extreme has always existed, which is intensified by opposition ; and as Irene Caterlot lashed Norman Colville with her words he was for the first time clasping his ideal with the strong and passionate embrace of blind, unreasoning, impulsive youth.

“ You are so desperately in earnest,” she cried scoffingly ; and his earnestness, which had taken form like molten lead poured into a mould and slowly cooling, hardened at her sarcasm.

He spoke out in his turn.

“ You talk about my toil,” he retorted, “ as if one personality mattered much even if I were to abdicate it, as if we had not too much of mean individualism ; but you think so little of the others whose name is Legion. There is too much toil for *them*, too much dull, hard, ceaseless monotony—

too much relaxation for us. We need to shift the lights and shadows ; I sometimes think that even *you* would be the happier for a little more shade to throw out the brighter lights in your life ; but the highest light is the dullest grey in blacker places."

Her fan shook with her merriment, the bunch of lilies which she wore on her bosom rose and fell with the continued laughter. It grated on him. He did not know enough about women to guess that it was simulated ; and he continued more vehemently :—

" How should *we* like it ? We dance, and it bores us. We have our theatres, balls, and concerts, and get heartily sick of them. With it all we don't enjoy life one tithe as much as any bird in this garden. We tire of amusement because we have so much of it. But think of the thousands driven round the circles of Purgatory, hands and feet that never rest, tasks that never change ! How should *we* like it ? "

Was it because she had mentioned Dante to him in her own badinage? Was he going to turn the tables and quote him to *her*?

As a woman of the world she had been prepared for the fact that human nature is full of surprises, and had found from previous experience that she could not always count on her successes. But she was a girl who resented any sort of humiliation; and at this moment she hated this man because he was good-looking and clever, because she had determined to encourage him, and because she had been altogether deceived when her mother had told her that he would be unusually rich and therefore an eligible *parti*.

The grapes had become sour; and she suddenly remembered the necessity for not sullying the old stock and contaminating her race by coming in contact with a man so essentially vulgar as his brother. The deterioration in manners was visible already in Norman. Why did he come here with his uncomfortable prophesyings, like a sort of

John the Baptist? She was not like the daughter of Herodias: she did not wish his head to be cut off, but she certainly did not care to be bothered by him any more. He was terribly young.

"Society tolerates most things — it has a welcome for all but the bores ; and a man who has a fad is always a bore," she said, yawning behind her fan.

He tried politely to hint that it was she who had forced the discussion on him—he had not even wished to begin it.

It had been her own desire to sit out this dance with him, and she had counted on his gallantry in not eluding her.

But now she suddenly rose.

"For Heaven's sake stop. I can't go into all this. My next partner will be waiting for me. I —"

And before she had concluded her sentence, he found that he was sitting alone. But something in the expression of her face told him that he had made an enemy for life.

CHAPTER IV.

REFUSING A FORTUNE.

"OF course she was quite unable to understand, but I was bound to speak out. It was something like crossing the Rubicon, and now the thing is done. I must abide by it, and I am glad," he said to himself, when he woke with a feeling of relief on the following morning. It took him some little time not only to realise that his troubled thoughts were beginning to sort themselves and to assume their true proportions, but that on the stress of an emergency he had taken a momentous step.

He had needed but that one hour of healthy sleep to feel sure that neither the one thing nor the other could be looked upon as misfortunes, but were possibly the greatest blessings in disguise. He did not regret having burnt his ships ; he had

done so a little suddenly, but in no fit of Quixotic weakness. He had had other self-delusions in his life; but he now saw these to have been a mass of strange contradictions—like a child's house of cards, constructed with considerable but infantile ingenuity, which any gust of wind must sooner or later have swept flat.

"For instance, if I had given up my life to my brother, it would have been *his* judgment and not my own which would have taken the lead in everything. The world which he offered me would not have been worth having, and I should have gained it at the expense of losing my own soul."

The problem which remained was how to break the news without ingratitude to Thomas.

"I must do it gently. I owe him almost everything," he thought. The last few years had shaped Norman's character, evolving all that was best in his nature. But throughout these changes he had been so considerate of Thomas, that to deprive himself of the worldly goods offered to him, insisting

on beginning at the very beginning, had seemed to him objectionable, lest it should bear the construction of being priggish and self-opinionated. He was no respecter of persons; but he did not care to vex the Philistines, though one of them might be his half-brother. He had kept from yielding to the temptation of being fantastically generous and over scrupulous—knowing that self-sacrifice was not always free from the worship of self—and had tried to persuade himself that a more practical and manly line of conduct, less hurtful to his brother's prejudices, might be adopted without detriment to his personal morality. But the final step had been taken for him independently of his own will.

A vow had been registered in the hidden silent stronghold of the man's spiritual nature, in which the solemn choice for good or ill is always taking place. His eyes had been opened to sympathise with the present as well as with the past, and he felt that he could never again be indifferent. The earth was not forsaken by God; and the saying still held

good : " My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ". Had not all the intellectual advancements, the revivals of art, and the discoveries of science in the present as well as the past, been ruled by Him ? The men in the past let their souls throb in aspiration and noble emulation with the men around them. They were not envious self-seekers, but they were workers. *They wrought with God.*

He was filled with a secret loathing for all that was mean, manœuvring and unworthy, and with a new distaste for self-seeking individualism.

Why had Thomas insisted on his seeing Irene, rousing his disgust when it became plain from Miss Caterlot's attitude that something unusual had probably passed between his brother and Sir Francis ? He could imagine it all—the interview between the respective guardians and the discussion of the advantages that would accrue to either family from the contemplated match. The blood tingled in his cheeks, and he was angry with his brother.

" Such a partnership must have come to an end

sooner or later. Nothing could ever have given Thomas tact," he muttered to himself.

It was useless to make fight against the growing conviction that the tastes of his would-be benefactor and his own high ideals of honour and dignity would be continually coming into collision.

It was absurd to prolong the contest. He was a lover of books and artistic in his tastes, but he was a still greater lover of active philanthropy. He had graduated without honours, not because it would have been impossible for him to take them, but because his activities had spent themselves in other directions. He had learnt drawing from Ruskin, and had sat at the feet of the master in some of his wilder theories of political economy as well as in his enthusiasm for art, and he turned to the thought of painting in his emergency.

"The sooner I make a clean breast of what I have done the better; thank Heaven, I can't go back from it now," he thought, bracing himself

for the encounter by plunging his head into cold water, and tubbing himself vigorously. He took one more glance at the wooded heights and the warm river valley—that too was invigorating. His nerves had been a little shaken, but he was otherwise quite uninjured, and ate heartily at breakfast.

“Well, at any rate I am fortunate to be emancipated from the shop ; and my ancestors on one side of the family were all shopkeepers,” he said to himself on his way back to London. He laughed and told himself that his blood ran cold as he thought of the invoices, the quarterly bills, the returned empties, to say nothing of the smell of bacon or pork which his soul detested, and in which —had he lived a generation or two before—he might have had to deal. Ironworks were a thousand times better than groceries ; and he felt sure that he was not half so good or so much to be respected as those hard-working ancestors of his who had no craving ambitions, no struggling pre-

tensions to raise themselves above the social status in which they had been born.

He had been rather inclined to discuss these ancestors with the pleasant freshness of boyhood which men so rarely retain, always believing in other people, and even talking to them in simplicity of his own affairs—never dragging those affairs in, but never making a secret of them. As an admiring friend once said of him at Oxford :—

“ If all *parvenus* were like Colville, there would be no such things as *parvenus*. If a *parvenu* wishes to hold his own, the best thing is an assured and easy manner, with no keeping back of facts but perfect frankness about his antecedents, and a dash of ‘sauce’.”

It was a sauce quite difficult to describe, touched by a certain lightness and grace of courtesy.

But then perhaps the friend did not quite understand that Norman Colville could not be properly described as a *parvenu*.

He felt grateful to the ironworks, as he deter-

mined to take the first opportunity of breaking his resolution to his brother.

"Now that I have done with Oxford, I ought not to be wasting my time in this fashion ; I ought not to take advantage of a rich self-made man," he said, accustomed from his childhood to put himself on the same platform as that of Thomas Colville, and to ignore the better blood which had come to him on his mother's side.

"I do believe," as one of his friends had said, "he is proudest of belonging to the *bourgeoisie*."

There was perhaps a trifle of inconsistency in adorning his little room near the river with a couple of Eastern mats, an easy chair, a divan, and two or three large fan palms. The palms were rather large for the room, and as he reached the doorway in the middle of the day it was difficult to see plainly that some one else was in the room, and that that some one was already crossing the floor, passing round the table, and coming towards him. At a second glance it was easy to distinguish

his brother in the stoutly built man, with a decisiveness of manner and rather an anxious expression.

"Well, is it all settled?" he asked, as he took Norman's hand and pressed it in his almost fatherly way, collapsing in another moment on the divan on the other side of the table. "How did you enjoy your dance last night?"

"You speak in riddles," answered the younger man, seating himself on the easy chair where the light fell full on his face, and with difficulty repressing a movement of contemptuous amusement at the trick which he more than suspected.

"What do you mean by all settled?"

"About the fair Irene. *They* are ready enough."

Norman winced. Irene had always seemed to him to be a very superficial person, a very worldly one, and a very vain one, without much to justify her vanity. But he had never said so. He was too courteous to women.

"I have told you *that* was not a subject to be

discussed between us. If people coupled our names together it was not my fault."

Thomas was startled and dazed. The frown on his brow and the compression of his long upper lip against the lower one, which he sucked in, betrayed his wrath. "Then what did you mean?"

"Mean? nothing. I have never meant anything. I have only obeyed you so far as to be decently polite."

"She will marry that spendthrift Newton, who has scarcely a penny to call his own—a pretty look-out for her father!"

"No one will be more ready to congratulate her than myself. But I don't think she will marry a poor man."

There was a pause—a pause which rather increased the hostile feeling, and then a bulldog expression came into Thomas's powerful and clear-cut face. "You are a confounded ass!" he remarked, "a jackanapes!"

"I am sorry you should treat the matter as a personal grievance."

In the almost classical outlines of the features the faces resembled each other, though in that of the older man there was nothing of the subtle softness of the more cultured youth. But both looked equally determined at this moment.

"It is absurd to make a personal grievance of such a matter. What can it signify to us how the lady marries? We can only wish her happiness," repeated Norman. If he were determined he was equally alert, and intelligent; and his brother knew from experience that in another moment he might exert that unmistakable personal magnetism of his to win him over to his own view of the case. The next move must be a wary one; and, as if to gain time and temper, Mr. Colville toyed with the heavy gold chain which he wore at his waistcoat. He still retained the trick of muttering with his lips, and tapping with his fingers—a survival of habit from the weary hours when he had sat in his

office adding up long lines of figures in connection with his business. He had been proud of his commercial prosperity—the word “push” printed on the door of his private sanctum had seemed to be symbolical of the character of the office. He meant to push still ; nothing, as he had always said, could be accomplished in this struggling, stirring century by men who were deficient in push.

He shot a wary glance at Norman. “It would have been a lift for you,” he observed, as if speaking to himself. “She belongs to one of the oldest families in the kingdom ; your mushroom peers are nothing to compare to it.” As a typical capitalist Thomas Colville considered that the British peerage might keep its blood from becoming attenuated by taking on new stock from great merchants who had made their fortunes. “It’s real old blood,” he observed confidentially, speaking as he might have spoken of a thoroughbred mare.

A flash came into the clear hazel eyes which were fixed on his, making him feel a little uncom-

fortable ; but his brother controlled himself by an effort, and simply answered, with a laugh :—

“ Some of the real old families are amongst the peasantry—the proletariat which you so despise. The wars of the Roses killed off a fair number of the good old peers. There aren’t many left. But what has all that to do with either of us ? ”

“ It has to do with your marriage.”

The suggestion of snobbishness led to another flash of lightning from the eyes which were so unpleasantly close to his own. But the younger man again controlled himself, remembering that all Thomas’s ideas were steeped, as it were, in trade, and only said :—

“ I have never yet found or believed in that other individuality in which I am to lose my own. Save me from it ! ”

And then he continued, breathing a little heavily : “ I must refuse to sit here if we are to bandy about a lady’s name ”.

“ You owe me something,” suggested his

brother. "It is I who have worked for you, and brought you up in luxury."

Then the thunder-clap came. The rapidity of the change in Norman's face was as sudden as the determination which was to change the whole current of his existence. And the older man, whose unconscious sneer had braced his nerve and set his heart beating tumultuously, was conscious in his turn of a disagreeable experience. The eyes fixed on his were not only flashing now, but concentrated in expression ; whilst the lips were set, the nostrils a little dilated, and the complexion had turned pale. There is no pain so bitter as that of offending others whom we love and respect, and who cannot rise out of the conventional way of looking at things. But Norman comforted himself by remembering that the love of money had not yet become a disease in the family.

"Certainly," he said, speaking slowly, as he sat erect in his chair ; "the sooner we understand one

another and make an end of it the better. You have done your best to educate me, and I am infinitely grateful to you. But I wish to work, and I am glad to find that you yourself have ceased to keep up the pleasant little fiction about the hard work of the leisured classes. Nothing can be further from my intention than to be supported in luxury. That society is deadly sick in which an individual cannot find subsistence through his own industry. It is very kind of you to wish me to marry and do nothing ; but the sooner we get rid of the idea that society exists for the comforts and luxuries of a certain number of tame beasts the better ; and I have no wish to be amongst the animals fed and caged by the rest of humanity. It is a wretched thing to do absolutely nothing, and to let another man sow and reap, and to sit still till the ripe fruit drops into your lap. The plan you propose is cruelly unjust to yourself. The dead weight of work rested heavily on *your* shoulders, why should the fruit drop into my lazy

hands? Enjoy them yourself, or leave them to the nation."

For a moment or two Thomas Colville felt it wiser not to speak. He had no idea of answering the question ; and he thought he had to thank the lad's university training for the fact that he imagined he had a right to be asking questions, like that tiresome old Socrates, as Thomas ignorantly fancied. Any child could ask questions ; the difficulty was to answer them. The elder brother had always felt it dangerous to provoke opposition ; he tried a bantering appeal.

"Everything will belong to you, you lucky young dog—money, friends, people of rank, too, just as if you had been born among the upper ten. If you are ashamed of me I am quite willing to keep in the background."

There was something so pathetic in this readiness to annihilate himself, that, though Norman winced again, drawing in his breath for a moment and looking stern, he answered, speaking more gently :

"You meant well. The bargain, so far as it was a bargain, has always been good and fair on your side. It is not your fault that it has palled upon me, and that I begin to find—desolation. I know you meant well. You thought that I might have an unexceptionable position in the world which you never entered yourself—a world where there is plenty of money, and people don't inquire who earned it. You were ready to expunge your own identity. You are very good, but I ask for no such sacrifice. I must have a purpose in my own life. You had one in yours."

The older man gazed at him, meeting the hazel eyes again, and trying to resist their fascination. The expression had changed once more. It was tender, and, in some incomprehensible way, pleading with him. "A purpose!" What did he mean by a purpose? The young fellow had no trade, no possible profession. Surely it was too late for him to come out with this spirit of dogged opposition. And yet, as their eyes met, the elder brother

remembered that it was perfectly true *he* had had a pleasure in work--in the work of acquiring his wealth--the pleasure of saving money and adding cent to cent. It is only the business man who knows how every apparently little item tells. And, oddly enough, it was the unmitigated hard work of looking after the tiny details which had given Thomas Colville some of the keenest delights of his existence. Certainly the amassing of a fortune had afforded him pleasurable excitement, though he did not quite know what to do with it now that he had made it. He did not know how to stop his brother, or to get back to neutral subjects, and he was even conscious of a certain amount of sympathy, though he made a deprecatory gesture as the latter explained :—

“ Look here, don’t think me ungrateful because I can’t accept what you planned for me. Did you ever read Thomson’s *Castle of Indolence*? To be sterile and idle is to be sick and miserable. I had planned to help these people, and you resent it.

We reason so differently about things that you would probably resent nearly everything I planned to do. Very well ; I have often felt that I should help them best if, instead of pretending to occupy a higher level, I was one amongst them, sharing their woes, and entering into their joys—taking part in what men like Tolstoi have practised as the gospel of work—with no pretentious humbug about me.”

“Carrying a hod and mortar,” suggested Thomas with loud mirth, to hide the fact that he knew nothing about Tolstoi—mirth which jarred on his brother’s enthusiasm—“I daresay you would look handsome enough with one on your back ; but you mustn’t forget to black your face to be properly picturesque. Oh, yes, of course that’s the last fashionable craze ! Even the duchesses are going slumming, but you must be a *leader* if you want to make a success.”

“I have no desire to be a leader, still less a hero, and I *have* a particular objection to that new

fashion of going slumming—it reminds me of Marie Antoinette playing shepherdess at the *Petit Trianon*—there is no real good to be done by playing at humility; and mismanaged charity is apt to go dead against all the theories of political economists,” answered Norman, jarred by the likeness between his brother’s words and the banter of Irene, who had likened him to a hero in an impossible story. “If anybody has been so mistaken as to tell you that I have any capacity as a leader, please to tell him it is absurd. I may have *some* power over men, but I suppose most of us have that. I am more or less dreamy, and I am fond of art. Nature did not intend me to be an orator. But I look forward to the time when all labour will be utilised, and all waste checked; and after all, one might do worse than carry a hod and mortar. There is no such vast difference between human beings as you seem to imagine. Meanwhile, I am glad enough not to be compelled to accept the disagreeably heavy doctrine of work *to its fullest*

extent. It's pleasant enough to have somebody else to cart the rubbish and dust off the earth."

"Fudge and nonsense! All that sort of immoral talk is destructive to the rights of property and common honesty," grunted his brother. "It's the greatest humbug out: you will ruin the empire with your audacious schemes; you will destroy its traditions of triumphs at home and abroad, and wake up to find trade dwindling, capital shrivelling, and self-inflicted famine."

"You are wasting eloquence and your wrath," said the younger man, now suddenly stirred to secret laughter as he recognised certain hackneyed quotations. It was not worth while to begin an argument which might end in quarrelling, or to try to explain the differences between the Radicals and Socialists whom Thomas insisted on muddling together. It was better to acknowledge the truth that his change of front had nothing to do with politics.

"I have no audacious schemes," he said, stifling

his laughter; “I am not even a politician. I simply remarked that I might do worse than carry a hod and mortar, though I was rather glad *not* to be obliged to carry them. It would require courage, but courage must be tempered with judgment.”

“Oh, you admit *that!* They are two rare things when they go together,—uncommon rare ; but it seems to me that you young fellows have little enough of the judgment. All this about taking part in the ‘common lot’ is just a sort of craze—you take it like the measles or the whooping-cough.”

“The bacillus is in the air—*infectious*, and sure to spread. There may be something in *that*,” said Norman laughing; “but though the modern doctors may have discovered the bacillus, I am afraid the infection is not so modern as you think ; you fancy things are new, whilst in reality nothing is new, —it is simply a question of history repeating itself. Do you remember Plato’s myth about the souls choosing their lots, and how the soul of Ulysses,

cured of ambition, went in search of the life of a quiet simple citizen and chose that life gladly?"

"Humph!" said Thomas Colville. He had forgotten the little Latin or Greek he had ever learnt, but did not care to betray his ignorance. He felt more at home in inveighing against the Fabian Society, the members of which, according to him, ought all to be condemned to penal servitude.

"Let 'em break stones upon the road—it will bring them to their senses."

To his astonishment his brother broke into a light laugh.

"Possibly; there are fanatics everywhere, but you cannot punish them. Is it their fault if they have come to think that this accumulation of private property in the hands of a few people is utterly destructive to the interests of humanity and the advance of the majority? Ideas about right and wrong differ. The police cannot always set them right. Excuse me for trying to explain."

If Norman's face had turned paler a few minutes before, Mr. Colville was now assuming the colour of a peony.

"Wait a bit," he shouted in passion ; "the time will come when all the trade will be driven out of the country, and when the benighted fellows whom you have been attempting to help will turn round on their leaders and rend them."

"Possibly; that is why we want to equalise matters, and keep their demands within moderate bounds. We want to keep them from having it knocked into their heads that every time a man does a stroke of work not in his bond, he is making it harder for himself and his mates."

"They are a pack of lazy hounds who should be flogged at the cart wheel."

"Isn't it natural that they should dream of an equitable division of the good things of the earth ? We all of us dream of some Paradise of leisure, some interval for ease and sleep after hard work. Don't we ? But you are mistaken if you think I mean to

meddle with these problems. I have had enough of them for the present. I may think, and most members of the Fabian Society do think, that the time will come when a true industrial democracy, educated and organised, will be able to take up the threads which will fall from the hands of the non-working possessing class. But I do not intend to act. I'm ashamed of using big words."

" You sit there calmly and talk of a revolution."

" On the contrary, it will be evolution. I have just told you that I do not wish to hasten the process, but neither can I prevent it. Neither you nor I can deny the advantages of progress to mankind."

" Progress ! It will be anarchy. It will be the guillotine."

" At any rate we shall not expect *you* to submit to decapitation. You will be out of it; and as I propose to go abroad to study painting and to support myself by it, the chances are that I shall be out of it too," answered the younger man, smiling good-humouredly.

CHAPTER V.

MAKING A COMPROMISE.

IT was as if another bomb-shell had exploded in the room. Thomas Colville's coarser mind was outraged and horror-stricken by the supersensitive sympathy which his brother had ever been so ready to bestow on the homeless, hungering multitudes around him. To Colville it was only a question of supply and demand. If according to statistics a percentage of superfluous humanity perished every year from hunger and cold, it kept the world from being over-populated with human beings packed as closely against each other as herrings in a barrel. He was not a man of culture; but he had picked up scraps of information, and knew that scientific authorities looked upon epidemics like the cholera, or scourges like war, as

necessary evils, only apparently cruel but in the long run beneficent to the race. Surely cold and hunger came under the same category in clearing off a number of the unfit to make way for a type of individual like himself, the man who worshipped success, and had been evolved by a process of natural selection to raise himself above his fellows and found a family. That was the sort of progress which Thomas Colville appreciated. He could not understand the generous instinct which was prompting his younger brother to entreat that the fortune which would otherwise be bestowed upon himself should be spent on endowing some London hospital, or on building decent and pleasant dwellings for the housing of the industrial army. He saw nothing noble in this sacrifice, so impressed was he with the absurdity of the unbalanced mind.

Still less did he understand Art spelt with a capital "A". Norman's paintings had always seemed to him to be another proof that much

learning had made his brother mad. He gave an instinctive shudder as he glanced at the blurred greys and browns of the picture which stood on the easel and which looked to his untrained eye like a blotch. It should have been explained to him that he could expect to see nothing if he looked at it close; but that if he stepped back for several yards he could get a view of the masts as they loomed through the fog.

But seeing that he had not been educated in the new art criticism he felt inclined to grin in derision as his brother repeated :—

“To be idle is to be miserable. I look upon laziness as the most detestable of vices, though I wonder how you can expect men to be industrious and inventive when they get only a fraction of the result of their labour. Let me fare as others fare. I daresay the weariness and stupidity is in myself —it may be myself I want to get away from, but all the same I must be up and doing. *You* were hard at work when you were young. How often

you have told me how you used to rise at four o'clock and be at it all day till eleven or twelve at night! Does not the kindred blood stir in my veins?"

The older man gazed in astonishment as Norman placed his hand on his shoulder, and continued pleadingly :—

" You have been wonderfully good to me,—but —did you ever hear of the fellow who was brought up all alone in a tower, and hedged round with precautions, to defy the prophecy that harm would come to him, and how the snake fastened on him from the sticks brought up to make a fire? *My* serpent has come out of another fire—it is kismet—we can neither of us help it. God knows I do not want to touch a penny of your money. You made it hardly enough, and you hoarded it for me; but the existence of this enormous fortune which I did nothing to earn galls me. See what it comes to—pain and misery for both of us. We shall never reason in the same way; and is it not

better that I should refuse to take your money, when if I take it I am not allowed to exercise my own reason? It is not my fault if we reason in a different way. You and I belong to different generations. You and your contemporaries were content to 'relieve distress' as you called it—*we* try to get at the roots of it. Time will decide which plan is the best. You did your duty—we try to do ours. We are moving, but it is useless to expect you to move with us. I am only modern. I cannot help it."

Thomas Colville's first impulse was to ask with an air of derision if that ridiculous thing on the easel was a sign that the present generation was moving; and if his brother was so fanatical as to suppose that he could earn his bread by selling yards of that sort of rubbish. But in Norman's presence he had generally found it best to drop the weapon of sarcasm which he had found to be so effectual in bullying his clerks. He shifted his position and looked away from him, as if still afraid

of encountering the bright hazel eyes. His own were almost hidden by the heavy eyebrows over-hanging them, drawn down by a habit of his in moments of depression. He no longer sat erect, and the thick neck drooped till the iron-grey whiskers brushed his shirt-front.

Each was sorry for the other.

"He is unfortunate and gullible," he was thinking of the younger man, "and he is crazed."

"They wrong him when they call him as hard as nails, but it is strange that he seems to have no feeling for the poor—he, whose ancestors knew the privations of want," reflected Norman, when, as an awkward pause ensued, he determined to vary his words.

"I wish to know my duty and to do it. I want, if you prefer it, to put it in that way, to escape from too much responsibility. Wealth will probably go on increasing, and poverty too. I am quite sure your money was made in a most honourable way; if I had not felt so, I could not

have accepted it and profited by it, as, thanks to you, I have done for so many years. And that is more than we can say of many of the fortunes made in the present day. You ought to profit by your fortune ; but it will do your name much more good if you endow a hospital, or leave it all to some charity. There is a gulf fixed between the capitalist and the hungry proletariat, and I do not choose to profit by any man's labour. I wish to live as simply as the equal rights of my fellow-men require. Is it too much for me to ask for that privilege when I find I am unable to justify my life, as a rich man here, by doing my share of work in the noblest of all causes, without offending you? You ask me what I expect. I answer—I expect nothing ; I can wait, like others, for my reward. It is waiting for most of us in these days, and I ought to learn to practise the patience which I preach. I have told you already that I prefer the changes which are wrought by evolution to those brought about by violent

catastrophes—by riots and bloodshed. There are numbers who think as I do. We merely forecast the transition through which society will probably pass; we do not hope to do much to aid it, though we have some hope that we may be able to control it. It is hard to try and make you understand without talking like a prig. But we refuse to retard progress towards the ideally best."

Thomas Colville looked up now in a suspicious, surprised manner. He ventured to mutter something about Radicalism and Socialism, about "tag-rag and bobtail"; but words did not come to him which were strong enough.

"You will drive me mad if you talk this stuff," he growled.

And then it was easier to burst into another loud guffaw at the expense of the young fellow, whose get-up was still irreproachable, and his surroundings luxurious, imagining for a moment that he could earn his own living. There was truth in such irony, and Norman acknowledged it.

"If you think I fancy I shall ever have my work spoken of as valuable to the nation, or that I shall ever be interviewed and photographed, you are mistaken," he said. "It is too late for all that, and, perhaps, a good thing too. It is the work I like, and one is generally happiest in following one's vocation. It will be necessary for me to study and earn little for at least a year or two."

"You are a damned fool—you will probably starve."

"No; I don't mean to starve—perhaps," with a smile, "if I *were* a hero I should; but I am not a hero, and never likely to be one—that's one of the odd contradictions about me—I see things in quite a common-sense light. I think I shall like working for my bread when it comes to that. Even if the work is hard it may be satisfying. But I don't intend to bring pain and despair on myself. Pain and despair would mean that I should be a hindrance instead of a helper to other people. You and I have not quarrelled, and I don't wish to behave as

if we had done so. I recognise your kindness, but not your right to demand submission—in the matter of marriage, for instance,” he added, lowering his voice. “I am not your servant, not even your son, and I have no longer any wish to be your heir. Keep your good things for yourself; but for a year or two at least, I will take something from you—that is, until I can earn enough for myself.”

“It’ll be a deuced long time before you make your mark,” said Thomas grimly.

“I don’t know about making my mark—it’s of very little consequence: the tide comes up so quickly and washes one’s little mark away from the sands. Genius is rare. I don’t pride myself on possessing it, but I may come in contact with some genius whom I may help.”

He was surprised to find himself talking so openly to his brother, who answered, as grimly as before :—

“I don’t understand you—you have no ambition”.

"I have never seen the good of it."

He did not add that ambition always appeared to him to go hand-in-hand with selfishness; for he knew that with Thomas ambition meant success, and that success was another synonym for making money.

"And you are in earnest?" asked his brother, as if he could not yet believe that the thing was possible.

"As much in earnest as I can be about anything. If I choose one path I must abandon others. I always felt that I could not abide restrictions, as a child I hankered after forbidden things. But don't be disappointed if I am not ambitious. I should have begun years ago; Burne Jones began as late, but he is a genius and had special advantages."

It seemed to the older man like a diseased state of brain in which it would be better to soothe the patient, and he even thought of calling in a doctor, should complications ensue. He could give no credit to the upright, single-eyed nature, drawing

its own conclusions directly and simply, and following them out, however much they clashed with the conclusions of others. He was, of course, desperately offended ; but the utmost he could do was to fall into Norman's own suggestion that there should be some sort of compromise—an arrangement satisfactory to both ; and that his younger brother should consent to receive at least a hundred a year till such time as he should be able to support himself without it.

“ I will take the hundred a year for the first two years, and I should be infinitely obliged to you if you would pay another fifty which I have been accustomed to give annually towards keeping up my clubs for men and boys. There is the boating club and the football club—I feel leaving these ; but you will be doing a benevolent thing if you help others to keep them going. If I took more of your bounty I should be idle ; for I need some incentive to work, and I wish to live simply. I have tried to look at the thing from every point of

view, and this seems to be the best. If I am ever in want of more I will write to you for it. *I promise I will,*" said Norman in answer to strenuous arguments.

And so they separated,—not to meet again for many a day.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE VIA SISTINA.

HAD he been in too great haste? Would the qualities which had hitherto stood him in best stead—culture, his knowledge, taste, good breeding, and that passionate love for his fellow-men which had permeated and exalted all his being—be wasted in the new line which he had chosen to adopt for himself? It was too soon for Norman's friends to decide the question when about a month afterwards he found himself established in a large dreary studio with a little adjacent ill-furnished bedroom at the back of the Via Sistina in his beloved Rome.

Stranded as he was by his own hasty act, it would under any circumstances have been difficult to make the best of his remaining resources.

His education in art had fitted him to be a patron or a critic, but had not made it likely for him to accomplish anything for himself. He would have to work for years not only at the rudiments but from the model at the life school, before he could hope to accomplish anything good even in landscape. He remembered, with a sense of humour, how fond he had been of saying that the period of literary and artistic brilliancy characteristic of at least a portion of the Victorian age had now expended itself—it being likely enough, judging from the experience of former ages, that during the next fifty years no great geniuses would arise, though there would be room for the exercise of the critical faculty. As a critic who could inspire others with his own love of literature and art, he might perhaps be worth something ; as a producer, he would be nowhere.

Well, if he had chosen for himself the full bitterness of the cup which his fellows had to drink, and the straitening of the baptism “ wherewith

they were baptised," he might have been forced to support himself by indifferent scribbling. But his brother's allowance of a hundred a year had saved him from a necessity which his passion for perfection and his habitual self-depreciation would have led him to deplore.

Thomas had insisted on paying his travelling expenses, and he had lingered by the way—first in Paris, though the *salons* were not open, and the Bois de Boulogne was deserted, and where only the ordinary British tourists were *en évidence*, thinking they saw Parisian life by walking up and down the Rue de Rivoli; and then he had spent a couple of weeks on the coast of Brittany, by the infinite waters, boundless, limitless, as they seemed to be when the curtain of the mighty tide came up and festooned the sands with foam. He had taken sketches of the moss-covered cottages, of the quaint-looking peasants, of the sun breaking through the mist on the flowery grass, or on the stony cliffs. He did not believe that anything could be accom-

plished without work, and was unfeignedly glad to escape from the *dolce far niente* and perfect appointments of the life that had been planned for him.

His studio was *al secondo*, with his little *appartamento* opening out of it, and was cool and pleasant enough in the beginning of October, though not so large as the studio beneath it on the ground floor, which was entered by folding doors opening from a sort of underground passage, and big enough for a coach and horses to be driven round it. That had been taken by an industrious youth, the winner of a scholarship from the Slade School, much more advanced than himself in the mysteries of painting, and in whom he had begun already to take a philanthropic interest, for the lad had an appearance of delicacy and of nervousness of manner which Norman interpreted as symptoms of overstrain. He had already made up his mind that it would not do to give him advice, but he must study and watch him so as to be able to help him; just as he was already studying another artist who, with his wife

and daughter, occupied the upper room at the back of the house—a grey-bearded worker in cameos, who was suffering from the fact that cameos were no longer in the fashion, and whose pretty bold-eyed daughter longed to be a *cantatrice*, and warbled from morning to night, to the despair of the Slade student, who declared that her voice was too penetrating, and that it got on his nerves.

The *ménage* was humble, and had little connection with the more aristocratic lodgers who took the better rooms looking over the street. But it was sociable, and by the time that Norman had made himself known to his neighbours, with his usual readiness to do them any good turn which might be in his power, they had much conversation, shouting to each other from the windows, or meeting on the bit of green sward under the olive trees which was close to the studio of the Slade student, in the evening. The only drawback was in the too constant vocal performances of the would-be *cantatrice*.

Norman's life flowed on calmly, if not sluggishly and dreamily. His dilettante instincts were somewhat difficult to shake off; and he sometimes felt that (if it had not been for that hundred a year) the necessity to work harder might have been a good thing for him. It was not the first time that he had visited the Holy City, the large income he had formerly received from his brother having enabled him to travel.

But he had always felt that any description of it would not tally with impressions which were overwhelming in their vastness. His historical sense had been always crushed by so much material from the ancient, mediæval, and modern worlds. It was in accordance with old habits that he found himself loitering in the great churches, gazing at the gigantic mosaics on the roof, or listening to the choirs of loud voices in which men's throats had to be strained to take the soprano parts. He perfectly well knew that, in spite of the volume of sound, the organ-playing and singing were inferior to that of

St. Paul's in London ; just as he knew, when he wandered through the great piazza in front of St. Peter's, with its surroundings of mighty columns fringing the Vatican and the great obelisk in the centre, that the late decadent Renaissance was not after all so very attractive ; and that when he entered through the big leatherne curtains he should be surrounded by huge monuments of some of the greatest scoundrels among the Popes, including the Borgia poisoners. But it did not do to reason about any of these things : the old fascination was always upon him, beckoning him forward to the side chapel which contained the Pietà—the most exquisite piece of work which ever originated from the genius of a boy of seventeen—and from thence to spend hours in copying bits of Raphael's Stanze, or studying the frescoes in the Sistine.

In the afternoons it was often his habit to lock his studio door behind him, putting the key into his pocket, and to saunter on towards the Pincian Hills, to get a view of the sunset over the ancient city.

Stephen Dillwyn, the Slade student, would often accompany him till they stood beneath the ilexes on the terrace outside the French Academy, discussing which models it would be better to select from those who lounged about in the old Italian costumes on the steps which seemed to be golden in tone—the picturesque shirts and velvet breeches of the men and boys contrasting with the white head-dresses, pretty bodices, and smart red and blue petticoats of the women.

It was Stephen's idea that these old costumes looked rather lugubrious on the idle, loafing models. He was ever inveighing against modern innovations. But, true to his opinions, Norman would point out how, in spite of the decease of many old costumes, Rome was still the city of curious and beautiful dress. To him it seemed as if the sartorial incongruities to be seen in her streets might be taken as a type of her many-sided life.

"What can be nearer to the ancient toga," he asked, "than the somewhat theatrical cloak in

which the average citizen loves to robe himself?" There was variety still in the great feathered hats of the Bersaglieri ; the flashing brass and steel of the dragoons ; the flapping white cap over the meek and patient face of the nun ; the hundred and one monastic costumes of the monks, ranging from the purest and simplest white to the deadest black that ever made a smut on the landscape ; and the long gowns of the Seminarists, varying from the startling red of the German school to the violets, blues, and whites of those from other nations. In every street the Middle Ages seemed jostling with the nineteenth century, check by jowl, he argued.

" Yet it is a hateful change within the last few years," lamented Dillwyn.

" Well, the change is for the better : the death rate is tremendously diminished, the murders and treacheries are fewer ; and I have no sympathy with your antiquarian longing to revive the vanished scenes, instead of taking your impressions from the

present day. Surely we ought to be grateful. It is modern Rome which has protected the ancient monuments; the people you condemn have made the excavations which alone make it possible for you to study properly. Think of the house of the Vestal Virgins!"

Stephen Dillwyn had no answer to make, as he was accustomed to be chaffed on the subject of the Vestal Virgins. Having already completed a study from one of the Baths of Pompeii, in which every detail of the background had been supplied by actualities, he was now busy with the daily lives of the Vestal Virgins, and studying from the disinterred statues, which were fairly complete, minus lips and noses. For once he let Norman have his way on the subject of that modern life which seemed to him such a thin and unseemly excrescence on the surface of all that had gone before. And as the little tinkling bell of the Convent Church of Trinità de' Monte began to ring for Benediction, both men would saunter in for a few moments to listen to the

voices of the nuns. Norman's critical ear told him that there was nothing wonderful in the chanting; and that, could it be removed from its adjuncts, it would be like most of the music which seemed to echo so richly from the aisles and roofs of the other churches, and would have been poor elsewhere. But he liked to be deceived, and sauntering up into the Pincian Gardens, watched like a child the round-about gyrations of the vehicles in the miniature drive, though it was not even enlivened by the cardinal's gorgeous carriage.

"*L'église est en déuil*," was the lament still; and more was the pity from an æsthetic point of view. Even the band which had been playing beneath the great palm tree was an inferior one. The friends would sometimes sit for a short time listening to its concluding strains, with representative types of many nations collected about them.

And again they were conscious of the same curious incongruity. Musical experts would have

decided that the band was an inferior one, whilst it seems somehow presumptuous for smartly-dressed living men and women to strut and swagger on the grave of so many historic ruins, far-famed palaces, and slumbering memories. The passing scene to the seeing eye became the shadow of the past, and the past became reality, as they turned from the vacuous band to look over the stone walls to the far-extending view in the blue distance, where the gardens of the Vatican stretched out beside the dome of St. Peter's, and the yellow Tiber rolled below as it rolled of yore.

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of," murmured the more sentimental Dillwyn.

And Norman's stronger voice replied:—

"Yet the living must live their life. I for one am not going to carp at the ambitious young Italian nation because it offends the historians by building tramways over the haunts of Scipio and Cicero, and dares to burn an electric light on the Capitol itself. '*Place aux vivants!*' The dead were great, but

the living are greater. Was not a live donkey thought by one reputed to be a wise man to be better than a dead lion? Is He not said to be a God of the living?"

CHAPTER VII.

WALKS ABOUT ROME.

As the autumn days went on these walks to the Pincian Hills to have a look over Rome and the Campagna in the sunset became fewer. For the weather was very cold and damp; and sometimes there were foggy mists, which, if not so yellow as London fogs, hung round the city like a wet blanket. And Stephen, whose modes of working were unhealthy, pleaded a cough and an inability to face the fog.

Norman, who was older by a couple of years, twitted him with having done his utmost to take cold. Stephen had just completed a successful little sketch of a young girl robed in white, kneeling by a tomb in the catacombs, which contained the body of one of her relations. The figure was

pretty and graceful, the drooping head slightly turned away, the curves of the neck lovely, and the drapery beautiful. But to study the accessories it had been necessary for young Dillwyn to spend hours in the bowels of the earth, painting by the light of a bit of candle in damp gloomy passages, lined with long narrow apertures very much like berths in a ship's cabin, where once had lain the bodies of the early Christians. In some you could still see the human dust lying, or the fragment of a bone,—all that was left of one of the young martyred saints whose remains had been so carefully wrapped in pure linen cloths, and placed there by loving hands so many centuries before. How else but in these passages, or in one of the many subterranean chapels where the Christians held their services in the first and second centuries when an outburst of persecution drove them from the haunts of men ; how else, as Dillwyn pleaded, could he copy the inscriptions or the bits of early mosaic which guided him to the meaning of the

whole? “In Pace,” or “Requiescat in Pace,” with such symbols as the anchor, the dove with an olive branch in its beak, and the ship being steered into port—all scratched in the quaintest way on the walls—figured in the faithful study made by the Slade student.

And now he was busy on the sketches taken from the house of the Vestal Virgins, his brush wandering he hardly knew how over the canvas, till it almost fell from his hand.

“All your studies are unwholesome. You should shake yourself out of the morbid. People who live in the past more than in the present have no right to come to Rome. It is a mercy that Providence sent me here to take care of you,” cried Norman one morning when there had been an early mist, and the lad had complained that the fog felt as if it were getting into his soul.

“A studio with this paved floor, and the doors so enormous that they could admit a procession, to say nothing of that vaulted ceiling with the mildew

and the crawling spiders of which you complained when I first saw you, though they have died off in winter, is malarious and horribly unwholesome, not fit for you any season of the year."

"And yours is not much better."

"Mine has a wooden floor, is frescoed, though it is shabby and draughty, and is half the size of yours. Besides, it does not matter for *me*. I am never likely to do much."

"That all comes of your absurd ideas. So long as you stick to the Impressionist school, you can't expect to succeed. You must first of all know your trees, know your rocks,—the very geology of the rocks and the structure of your branches—before you can hope to paint them," grumbled the Slade student.

"A man must not paint what he knows, he must paint what he *sees*. He has not to think about what he knows, but to paint everything freshly, just as it appears to himself. In painting a tree you have the play of light, the atmosphere,

and the movement caused by the stir of the wind, not only the tree itself to consider."

" You have learnt this from the French heretics."

" I learnt it from Ruskin, but there is an exactitude and severity about those pictures of the French which few of us can hope to equal. Look at Corôt, for instance."

" The freedom of the artist is limited. He cannot hope to accomplish everything. He must work within certain limits. What he sees may be worth nothing. The eye must be trained before it can see."

" I do not admit it. We shall get to a great deal more. We are only on the threshold of the great art of landscape painting, and we want seers—we want originality."

" You will find that the public will not stand your absurdities."

" Never ask the public what it wants. A work of art should dominate the spectator."

They ended by laughing as they often did, and

then shaking hands after they had had a good tilt over this fertile subject for squabbling.

And then Dillwyn said, a little sadly :—

“ You think too much of others and spend too much time over us—over me, for instance. If you don’t take more care of number one, you yourself will run a chance of being forgotten.”

There perhaps he had hit the truth. And though Norman answered lightly, “ One would like to be forgotten sometimes. I don’t wish people always to be remembering me. I should never covet the sort of fame that George Eliot extols. It may be a grand thing to join the ‘Choir Invisible,’ but to belong to it would give you no rest in your grave,” he knew that his friend’s stricture was true.

He had begun to feel that he had not ability enough to strike out a new line for himself, though for the sake of argument he kept up the joke with Stephen. Honestly he did not wish to add to the miles of good sailcloth spoilt by the speculation of making them into bad pictures, and secretly

acknowledged the excessive proportion of ruined canvas in the French *salons*.

His plain-spoken Roman masters had assured him that he would never get out of his cursed mannerisms.

“I shall never dance a war dance before a masterpiece of my own,” he acknowledged one day, in a burst of confidence over the friendly pipe, to Stephen. “I ought to have begun at the very beginning. But there are compensations—one is to have a genius for one’s friend. Seriously, old man, when one thinks of the good and noble lives led all unnoticed and unknown to fame, one comes to wonder if these are not the best.”

His genius was for philanthropy, and already he had hankerings after the past. The sorrows and struggles of the people at the “East end” of London had never been forgotten by him ; they had always remained vividly in his memory, and haunted him in the great tapestried *salons* to which he was sometimes invited.

He often strolled to the Ghetto, because it reminded him of Whitechapel; the Jews being very much the same all the world over. All that was left of their well-known quarter still remained very sordid, very poor, and very crowded, with the same groups of dancing children and gambling loafing men that are to be seen anywhere on the Commercial Road on any day in the week. It was more open, as the Roman authorities had cleared out the greater space; and it was characteristic of Colville that he instantly began to inquire what had become of the evicted tenants. But it was still full of dreary memories—memories from the time when the Jewish population had been strictly confined in it, locked in after sundown like schoolboys, persecuted, robbed, and harassed by their Christian masters.

Now the older structure of society, with all its prejudices and its cruelties, was, as Dillwyn deplored, rapidly going to pieces, and only bits of it remained, like that strange fragment of the massive wall known

as the “Muro Torte,” which reminded him of all outworn civilisations, ready to totter down by their own weight, and only held in place by the habit of association.

Norman would not have been himself if he had not inquired as the cold weather came on into the condition of the suffering peasants. He began by assisting the models, who from their habit of standing about waiting to be hired, and shivering in their cold attire, were attacked with various ailments. The lame beggar was suffering from rheumatism, and the madonna with her linen-folded head-dress had nearly killed her bambino by exposing it to the coldest blasts of the “*tra montano*,” whilst the boys in their goat-skin breeches had broken chilblains on their feet, and the terrific brigand was constantly drunk. The infirmities of the genuine beggars were still more terrible; and Norman soon found a good deal of his time employed in helping a couple of energetic English old maids who had started a quasi-hospital, in which they bandaged bad legs and

dressed the wounds of the people. The absence of active organisation amongst philanthropic workers struck him with surprise—the picturesque dresses of the ambulance corps drawing attention to the only striking exception.

His walks became a little sad now that the Slade student no longer shared them with him. As long as November and December lasted it had been easy to tempt Stephen from his studio with enthusiastic descriptions of the magnificent colouring never so fine as at that time of the year, and the splendid blues and purples to be seen when the mist cleared not only from the Pincio and over the wide-spreading Campagna and silver line of the sea melting into the horizon beyond Ostia, but also from the Capitol looking down on ancient Rome. He delighted in the view at sunset with the glimpse of the river and Castle of S. Angelo, greys and browns in the distance, and the sunlight glinting on the angel, whose sword seemed veritably to flame. But when Christmas came, with

laughter and talking in the streets, and the clanging of bells, Stephen complained of sleeplessness. He was not even to be beguiled by his friend's suggestion that he would find suggestive subjects for successful pictures in the throngs of importunate children who crowded the marble steps of the "Ara Cœli," selling their wax bambinos for a few sous, or in the little ones whose mothers were setting them up in turns on a miniature stage within the church, on the very site where the temple of Jupiter once stood, and making them preach to the crowd of adults.

"Some of them are the boldest brats that ever sucked coral—they strutted and fumed like veritable Ciceros; but some were so nervous that they broke down crying," reported Norman. "There was one little girl who came forward with an ingenuous smile, and would have supplied you with such a picture! I would have taken her with the foreground of the peasants around her: all sorts of types,—some awed, some amused, and with the

background of a fine old carved figure of a cardinal reclining on his tomb, and seeming to listen to her. Of course, she didn't understand a word she said, and often pointed quite in the wrong direction," he added, "but somehow the innocence of childhood hushed the crowd into silence, and they hung upon her babyish lips. It reminded one of the Child Crusades."

But Stephen only shrugged his shoulders. He declared that there would be fuss enough with the infants when Epiphany came; and that what with the blowing of trumpets and the sucking of sweets, he wondered that the Romans ever got their children into hand again. If *he* had to make a picture at all he would rather paint one of "Sempronius Gracchus" thrown down the steps, which recalled quite other memories; he should have thought that Norman would sympathise most with Gracchus in his vain attempt to introduce justice into the Roman social system.

He was in a contradictory mood; and the break-

down which Colville had been long expecting took place on the day of St. Ignatius Loyola, when all Rome flocked to the Church of the Jesuits. The gorgeous and rather flashy church was packed from door to door, the immense gallery of lights over the high altar, candles and chandeliers, line upon line, and circle upon circle, being lighted as the service wore on. High up on the dizzy roof men were to be seen, crawling upon little ladders with apparent risk to their necks, lighting the candles in the remotest recesses of the dome. Stephen fastened his eyes upon them with a sort of fascination, while the light glimmered on the huge ball of purest and bluest lapis lazuli surmounting the pillared tomb of St. Ignatius.

Presently he whispered : "Why do all these women stare up at this trapeze work? We did not come to see a hippodrome. Let's get out of it. The incense makes me feel bad."

But the fainting fit was more serious than he

had anticipated, and an additional sensation was provided when the lad, white as a corpse, had to be carried through the densely packed crowd.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VESTAL VIRGIN.

IT was the beginning of a series of fainting fits through which Norman Colville carefully nursed his friend, making a shake-down on the floor for himself in the lad's big cold bedroom, and finding it difficult to keep up a proper wood fire. He was shocked to find that Dillwyn had been trying to get through the winter, after the manner of the Italians, content with an ordinary brasier which could scarcely warm his hands.

“ Is it the Roman fever ? ” he asked the English doctor, whom it was necessary to call in.

“ Why don’t you ask me that other question, ‘ Is it the influenza ? ’ a question which every one who overtaxes his strength and overdraws his capital asks just now in England ? ” was the

answer. "No; it is simply mere exhaustion, the result of overwork, too little food, and exposure to damp and cold. This place is like a vault."

But the temperature ran up to an alarming height; and the lad cried out in his delirium, nearly always on one subject,—the excavations in the Forum and the house of the Vestal Virgins. Sometimes, indeed, he fancied himself in a deserted garden, possibly that of Trajan's villa. For he raved of columns and statues and marble bas-reliefs, of cypresses and pines, mimosas and flowering shrubs; then declared that there was nothing so melancholy as these old gardens, with broken statues and empty vases, which made his heart ache with their disordered loveliness.

By the end of the week he was better, thanks to his careful nursing. Norman had provided the beef-tea and wine which had been ordered, having hitherto found his moderate income sufficient for his humble wants. He had undertaken to persuade his friend to move from the back of the Via Sistina

to more sunny quarters. But Stephen never was practical. For some reason he refused to move, and declared that he had made a promise not to do so.

“Promise ! to whom ?” asked Norman.

Then the youth grew mysterious, and declared that no one had any right to ask the question. He was devoted to his present studio ; to leave it would be to disturb his inspirations.

After a few days he was at work again, the doctor having admitted that it might be better not to contradict him, but to let him do a little at the painting on which he had set his heart.

It was that of the Vestal Virgin ; and Norman noticed that Stephen’s hand lingered lovingly over the picture, touching it here and there ; he began to alter the features.

“Why do you do *that*?” he could not help asking. “I thought you intended to keep to the idea of the statue in the Naples Museum said to be restored by Michael Angelo ?”

"I know better *now*."

It was another mystifying answer. But Norman was not curious. He became a little impatient as he sat down by Stephen's side and watched a face gradually grow out of the canvas which was altogether different from the one which had preceded it. First of all he was not interested in it; he was watching the trembling fingers, the hands, which were long and nervous, and which twitched as they worked. The invalid's complexion was waxy and unwholesome, like that of a man who had been for a long time ailing. But what else could be expected? Stephen's short illness had been sharp, and for some time before it began he had been seedy and overworked. His eyes glittered almost unnaturally; he was working with fitful eagerness.

And the eyes of the Vestal, which had been blue, were being painted in with browns and blacks. Something of the same fire which glowed in the eyes of the sick man were being transferred to those on the canvas, when Norman Colville interfered.

"Stop, *mon enfant*," he said unceremoniously. "You have been at it long enough. Medical directions must be obeyed."

The young artist looked round angrily. "You are not my true friend, or you would not think of stopping me." But Norman knew from long experience that it was of no use to reason with him, and gently relieved him of his palette, busying himself unconcernedly with washing his brushes till the first storm of indignation had expended itself.

"You are cruel. You don't understand. I am painting from the *life*."

"And you are a fool who deserves a lecture. The doctor was very good in humouring your caprices, but it is my belief that he ought to have been a little sterner. The smell of the paint is not good for you."

For if not an artist yet himself, Norman Colville understood something of the artist temperament, which is sometimes childish, sometimes sublime, and often irritating and difficult to deal with.

He knew it would not be long before the lad's temper cooled. And by the time the palette was cleaned and the brushes thoroughly washed Stephen suffered himself to be put in his armchair, and seemed to be in a mood for confidences.

"Do you believe," he asked, "that those whom men call dead may be near us—even though thousands of years may have passed? The worst of it is that there would be such a lot of them."

"That depends upon what you mean by dead. I believe in the possibility of spiritual existence."

"But do not you believe that if we think of dead people long enough, the concentration of that continual thought might have the power to recall them, and compel them to show themselves to us, even though they have for centuries gone to dust?"

"Utterly impossible! such a possibility would be limitless, and would make life intolerable. It proves that you want sleep and—just now—a cup of tea."

"But if such possibilities existed," the youth pertinaciously continued, "the devil might take advantage of them. *I* do believe that the evil one has access to us in our dreams; most of those quaint old divines believed it. And if something uncanny and wicked *were* to come to us, and take possession of us, if ——"

"You should never allow yourself to think such morbid nonsense. Such ideas are hateful."

"Like the abominable reptiles which crawl out upon us in darkness. There are plenty of abominations in this room. *One only* is pleasant to me. I want to paint it—for I have *seen it*. You must make excuses."

"My poor fellow, you have been ill enough for me to make excuses for any amount of queer thoughts; but you must not give way to them, so I cannot listen," said Norman cheerily, as he set himself to make the tea as cleverly as a woman. "The thing will be to get you out of this hole. When the spring comes you and I will look out

for some fair retreat amongst the olives and the vineyards."

"I don't want your olives and vineyards. If I have indeed called up a spirit from the vasty deep, and that spirit implores me not to leave her, I must stay in this room."

"You are arguing in a primitive manner, much as savages would argue. We are only wasting time in such absurd conversation."

"Do you pass judgment on me in that hurry, just when I am beginning to do the indiscreet and tell you what has actually happened? Nothing is impossible. That is one of the generalisations which are so easily made in a ready and sweeping way by people who know nothing."

The lad was not naturally handsome, but his appearance had altered strangely since his illness. His lips seemed to be less thick, and his personal plainness was lost in the rapid changes of expression which chased each other on his now emaciated face. You did not know what he would look like

at the next moment, and your eyes followed him unconsciously. He was not the only person on Norman Colville's hands just then ; for the grey-bearded cameo-worker on the upper floor seemed to be breaking up, and his hard-worked old wife was too much occupied in the push and scramble of life and in obtaining the barest necessities for the invalid and her other children to pay much attention to her eldest daughter. Filomena was too often wandering alone about the streets. She was not allowed to sing now, all noises being hushed ; but she fretted about her music, and in an unwise and expansive moment Norman promised to write to his brother to ask him for some money to pay for good lessons in singing for her, so that she should be able to earn her bread. He might have recognised his mistake when Filomena threw herself upon her knees before him, covering his hand with grateful kisses. She was a slip of a girl, dark, pale, and vehement about everything.

“ You are preparing a pretty weight for yourself

to hang like a stone about your neck in the future," said another of his artist friends, who was older and wiser. " You will not find it easy to get rid of a burden like that."

" Do you speak of these people as if they were *canaille*? Why should the genius and imagination of a girl like this be choked by her surroundings?"

" Query," laughed his friend, "*has* a girl like this any genius and imagination?"

" Emotion then—if you prefer that word. Why should her emotion—her enthusiasm for music, and her determination to do something beyond the average—be choked and deadened?"

Still the other man shook his head laughingly.

" I do not blame her," continued Colville hotly. " She needs the thrill of an audience—she wishes to be educated for the profession—the talent is the call—the voice, if it were cultivated, would be magnificent."

His own little income was melting away with the increased expenditure; and he gladly accepted

the extra cheque which his brother sent him, that he might expend it for others. He had refused to take it for himself, insisting that a hundred a year was more than he needed for his own wants, but adding that he would gladly act as almoner of any modest sums which might be entrusted to him.

CHAPTER IX.

HAUNTED.

STEPHEN'S painting made slow progress. The black eyes of the Vestal, which were bright one day, on the next were dimmed by suffering, with great circles beneath them. The complexion, which had been glowing with life on the one day, on the next became pale with bluish shades as if seen by moonlight ; and the convalescence of the artist became subject to the same alternations.

He talked excitably and wildly of the fire which the Vestals kept alive, feeding it secretly and burning it for ever, as symbolic of the changeless power of love ; of the annihilation of time, which was after all an illusion ; and then of the bewitching women, one of whom stood there night and day in his studio, in her flowing drapery,

and just now with the smile upon her lips and the brightness in her eyes much as she must have looked two thousand years before.

"It is not I who paint the portrait out. I am forced to do it. The lips suddenly became white under my hands, the cheeks sunken, the eyes fixed and the whole face hollow; and then I recognise the fact that she is dead—dead in a horrible way, yet terribly alive." He shuddered. "Yes; it was a pretty idea for women to wear those soft white stuffs which draped gracefully, and were not stiff and rustling like some of our odious modern silks. I loved her when I saw her first; yet sometimes now she is horrible; I am petrified when I see her."

Norman laughed; longing once more for the sunny boyish smile, and determining to call in a specialist for nervous disorders.

"There seems to be no limit," he said, "to the excursions of the imagination in all sorts of unhealthy regions; but you will find yourself weakened by them."

"It is not imagination, it is the actual truth."

For a long time the lad had seemed to be struggling against an impulse to confide in his friend; and now, giving a gasp, he forced himself to continue :—

"She *claims me*. I am hers. The fault was mine in the first place. I conjured her up. It was a wicked thing to do. And now I know all about it. She lived and loved all those centuries ago, and they buried her alive. I saw it all in a vision,—the dreadful procession. Her spirit has never found rest all these ages. And now she comes to me every night, and I shall have to go with her. I am already as good as dead."

"Pooh!" said Colville, coolly breaking off the ash of his cigar on the edge of the little table which held Stephen's paintbox, and in somewhat profane proximity to the picture of the Vestal Virgin. "That is your diseased imagination. She does not come to you. Unscientific people always leap to conclusions. The vision is subjective."

"But its recurrence, its invariability, and its substantiality ; it is as substantial as myself."

"And one can almost see through you."

Stephen shook his head. "You are always a sceptic. 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'"

"I would quote something original if I tried to quote at all," answered Norman, smoothing the curly hair from the heated forehead.

The logic was false, but it did not do to irritate Stephen and argue matters further. It was wiser to ignore the boyish confidences.

"What you have told me convinces me more than ever that you must change your lodgings," he said cheerily. Yet that night he watched with him without telling him that he meant to do so, creeping into the room after he was asleep and burning a night-light.

About half-past twelve o'clock Stephen, who had been sleeping restlessly, began to tremble. The trembling which shook him from head to foot was

so violent as to rattle the small iron bedstead, and was succeeded by a rigidity in which his eyes were wide open and unnaturally strained like those of a sleep-walker. He did not see his friend, and was evidently unconscious of his presence ; but it was more than an hour before the breathing, which had almost ceased, began again perceptibly and naturally.

On the following morning the specialist was consulted. A serious look came into the doctor's deep-set eyes, which were overhung by a massive brow.

"The poor fellow is badly run down. We must take care to keep up his strength. I have every hope that we shall pull him through, but it will be necessary either to destroy the picture or to move him from this place."

It brought matters to a crisis. Norman spoke out, determining to have no more pity on the fluttering sensibilities.

" You must put your work aside if you mean

ever to work again. It will be fatal if you allow yourself to indulge in this rot."

It was not so hard for him to accompany the sick man in leaving Rome as it might otherwise have been ; for it was as if his own thoughts had taken a dismal turn, in consequence of his over-fatigue and constant loneliness. If he sauntered into the Museum of the Capitol it was not the marble Faun, or the beauty of the Venus, but "The Dying Gladiator" which attracted him—one of the only instances in ancient art of the pitiful portraiture of human woe. Christian sentiment almost seemed to be anticipated in the sympathetic statue of the humble Gaul who died, "unwept, unmourned, unsung," among the many myriads sacrificed in the arena to the Roman passion for blood. And if pagan art seemed to become for the moment the servant of a human sympathy and to have thrown off its hard exterior of æsthetic self-complacency, mediæval art had also interpreted the saddest phase of human sorrow in that portrait of the "Beatrice di Cenci"

by an unknown artist, of which all the copies were such futile failures.

“Poor child!” he said to himself as he took a last glance at the young girl dressed in the white smock worn by condemned prisoners, with her eyes swollen by long weeping, and reluctantly persuaded to look towards her portrait painter. “I could much more easily have understood it if Stephen had been haunted by this picture instead of by the Vestal.” He thought, unconsciously soliloquising as we all do at times: “She hardly realises where she is; her whole soul is merged in the blackest gulf of irremediable woe; her eyes look at you in a frightened pitiful way as if she thought that you too had some intention of adding to her misery. She is beautiful, but she has no joy; she is innocent, but stained with ineffaceable woe; an infant in years, she has outlived in experience the oldest living now. There is nothing for her but to die. And as one looks at her, her approaching death seems the least pitiable part of her lot. She is dead already, dead to humanity;

and her blood lies on the head of those whose work in life it is to murder the innocent and defile the sinless."

Perhaps it was because he was a painter of landscape scenery, and perhaps because he was tired and out of sorts, that he felt as if he were a little weary of all the Mercurys, Venuses, Bacchuses, and Apollos. They began to appear to him as if they were a realisation of a hard and dreary selfishness, the cold and lifeless worship of natural phenomena in all that brutality and self-confidence which was at the root of paganism, and pagan art. No wonder it failed in the end to satisfy the cravings of the human spirit, and that men turned with relief from the worship of a cruel joy to that of a sorrowful love.

He considered it his special duty to take Stephen to the hills for the summer weather, and afterwards to Castellamare and Sorrento. He was as much interested as ever in the life of the people, thinking in his cooler retreats of the white-faced women and

children in the choking heat, and the few who had to brave the perils of the Campagna, exposed to the scourge of the malaria.

But, personally, he had had enough of Rome for the time, and was thankful for some excuse for getting away from the streets, which were so noisy with traffic, from the pattering footsteps and the clamour of tongues. He sketched and studied a good deal, and when Stephen shook his head at some of his weird performances, telling him that the public would never like "impressionism," he repeated that an appreciation of what was right in painting was not to be expected from the public, it being a special endowment, like the appreciation of what was best in music.

"It is a gift independent of social rank, and is granted to the poorest as well as the noblest. All that is highest in every art must appeal to the expert and not to the populace. Unknown to himself, the Philistine must be coerced into a grudging acknowledgment of what is best."

"On the other hand, I hold that a picture should keep to the level of the popular understanding," retorted Stephen.

It was a good sign when the two young men began to quarrel again. In the simple domestic life which they led during the summer months, resting a good deal, and working only when they pleased, Stephen's insomnia abated. For a long time Norman kept up the old habit of watching him, taking off his shoes so that his own tread should be noiseless whenever Stephen disappeared from his bedroom, and it was judged wiser to follow him. More than once the invalid acknowledged that he thought the Vestal Virgin had concealed herself in the garden amid a grove of ilexes, and was beckoning to him to come to her; and on those occasions his friend had found him pale and trembling as before, with his lips so white and drawn as to show the gleaming teeth, while he muttered to himself and accused Colville of tyrannical interference.

But after a few weeks these illusions passed off, and the healthier impulse for genuine work returned.

That was in the autumn, when they went to Castellamare, and made frequent expeditions to Pompeii, and when they were never tired of studying the details of a long-lost civilisation, down to the ruts made by the chariot wheels on the roads, the election addresses on the walls, the theatre bills in the shops, the cauldrons for making the soaps, the stones for crossing the roads, and the cosmetics in the ladies' boudoirs. They were as pleased as children with the loaves in the bakers' shops, the wine bottles on the publicans' marble counters, the clothes still in the laundry, the half-finished mortar still on the stone beside the dead mason, the bag of gold still in the miser's hand, as he lay a corpse in his garden, and the pickaxe in that of the other poor wretch who was trying to break through the wall of his house. They squabbled as to whether there was any proof that

the priests of Isis cheated or not, or whether the proof was only in Bulwer's novel. But the squabbles were wholesome enough, and Norman Colville accompanied Stephen Dillwyn everywhere to guard against any return of his former delirium. He decided that the great secret was to get him to work in the open air, and only for a certain time every day. So in the open air they sketched, tramping over from Castellamare and carrying their lunch—working in the deserted temples, the theatres, the broader streets, the tiny slums, in the court-yard, or the dining-rooms. They amused themselves with the excavations which were still leisurely proceeding, apparently under the supervision of one man and a boy. And they theorised about the lava belched out in the throes of the mountains and calcinated in all the surrounding earth, seeing in these gigantic organic explosions the origin of the wars of the Titans, the forge of Vulcan and the Cyclops Polyphemus hurling rocks after Ulysses. Norman Colville was glad of an excuse

for these healthy tramps, but a little inclined to be afraid of his friend shutting himself up again in the scene of his intended picture, the bathroom with the very brasier by which the bathers had warmed themselves. And whenever Stephen Dillwyn lingered too long in the interiors, studying the bas-reliefs, or the half-effaced frescoes of winged genii, griffins, and arabesques, with the dances of nymphs and fauns, he said to himself with a shrug that it would not be pleasant to have any more dead women walking about. But, when there seemed to be no fear of Stephen becoming psychologically interesting again, he did not feel justified in interfering with the necessary work. For, after all, the pictures from Pompeii promised to be a success ; the colour, scheme, and the composition being in harmony with the sentiment, and he sympathised with the young artist's anxiety for the correctness of every antiquarian detail.

"It is *you* who will make the money," he said as he looked at the sketches, "and you will

deserve it, for setting an example of earnestness and correctness. But, remember, if I have to go to England, you must not overwork yourself again."

Stephen's scholarship had enabled him to go halves in the expenses of these wanderings; but Filomena had written to report progress, and to request more help for her singing lessons. Norman had so long been accustomed to have pensioners upon his bounty that he would have thought little about this request, had he not been taken by surprise by a letter from his brother. Thomas Colville had determined not to leave his money to any hospital or charity, but to make another very unexpected use of it. He had married a girl in a better class of society than himself; and he wrote to say that though he could continue to pay the moderate sum which would keep Norman from starvation, he must request that even that be not mentioned to his wife.

"It is not that she would grudge it to you: she

has married me for myself ; but perhaps she would imagine that you would share the property with her in the future ; and it will now be better to abide by your own decision in that matter. I need not say that I have settled the whole of the money upon her. Women have their fads ; and if you are not coming to England for a time, it will save us from being brought into incessant collision on political and other matters on which we never agreed. I see more clearly than ever that a change is impending, disastrous for the greatest empire in the world. Our trade will be driven away, and we shall have riots and bloodshed. If our country falls it will be from the horrible disregard of just authority which some of you young fellows have done your best to bring about."

Norman's face changed as he read. He had been so carefully on the watch to keep every wind which blew from agitating the wires of a nature as highly strung and over-wrought as Stephen's, that he was scarcely aware how he too was human, and

had his share of human sensitiveness. The letter jarred upon him.

“I am not the only unfortunate whose attempts to do good have ended in disastrous failure,” he wrote back ; “but I think your dismal prophecies are somewhat premature. I have told you that I have made up my mind to have nothing to do for the present with a question which I consider to be the most important of the questions of modern times. I shall stick to my art. I am only a foreign artist just now, and as such I try to be *bon bourgeois*, and am aware that I am a little Bohemian. Perhaps you do not know what that odd combination means ; but you will understand me when I tell you that I think the rush and whirl of life have eaten away the poetry from the minds of our English artists. In the Academy everything is too apt to be hard and matter-of-fact. The last Academy I saw was full of the presentation portraits of old ladies and gentlemen past the charm of their youth and not always attractive in other ways. (He would

have left this out if he had known that his brother's portrait was just then being painted at a high price for the Academy; but he was sore altogether at the tone of his brother's letter.) Why should I come to England when, if I venture to speak out, I expect to be ostracised by the Brahmins of art, just as I am ostracised for taking an interest in the Labour question by an employer who ought to know that the last thing I should desire would be for the commerce to be driven out of England? But a truce to these disagreements. Let me congratulate you on your marriage. It proves that I was right. Why you should have condemned yourself to a hard-working, joyless, hopeless life for so many years is incomprehensible to me. I can only feel more than ever what a pity it was that you secluded yourself because you had set your heart on making me happy. I think I have proved that I can be happy in another way, and it is right that you should reserve the best of everything for yourself.

" You know that your happiness is that which I most heartily desire; and you also know, though I took a present from you for the sake of others some time ago, how I had determined not to touch a penny of your property. You are quite right to spend it on yourself and your wife. I can only repeat my thanks for your goodness during the years in which you so generously educated me. According to my creed that man is to be despised who cannot support himself after he has received a good education."

" It is better as it is, though I hope for his own sake she did not scheme for his money," Norman said to himself as he read some of the old man's beatific raptures about his wife, and tried to persuade himself that it was best.

" Opinions are a poor cement between human souls; but the one thing I don't want to lose is the dear old fellow's affection," he thought, as he sealed the letter. And then he answered another note which was from a young peer, with whom he

had been on cordial terms at Winchester and at Oxford. Lord Melton had backed him up in debates at the Union and had been himself a member of the Russell Club, the traditions of his family being Liberal if not Radical.

CHAPTER X.

AN UNEXPECTED INVITATION.

LORD MELTON had continually written since Norman Colville had left London to invite him to his place in —shire ; and just as continually Norman had politely but firmly refused. The liking, indeed, had been more on one side than on the other ; but it had to be admitted that Melton had never been capricious. He seemed determined not to take offence, though all his overtures had been refused ; and if a few of his notes had been almost angry in their tone, the anger had been caused by Norman's determination either to travel or to bury himself from society. That a fellow with such æsthetic tastes and such artistic capabilities, so valuable to other people, should insist on hiding himself, and fall a victim to

delusions which went a good deal further than Lord Melton had ever dreamt of, was not to be tolerated as compatible with his ideas of hospitality.

"He is a noble fellow, with the one fault of insisting on thinking for himself. He fought my battles at Winchester when I was a little chap, and I had a juvenile feeling that to know him was to be inspired with quite a new idea of friendship ; but then I was an enthusiastic little chap ; and one outgrows enthusiasms," he explained one evening to some of his guests in the smoking-room, making no secret of the fact that he resented the way in which his presents had been refused, and his invitations slighted ; "but he is perverse, and sticks to his ideas. I believe it strikes him as a little queer that all the good people who call themselves Christians never think that the teaching of the New Testament is to be carried out to the letter."

"Fine talking, but not safe, you know—the times are so different," answered another man. "'The letter kills'—I'm a great dab at quoting Scripture."

There was a laugh, and then somebody said more quietly : "I don't see how you can call that sort of thing Christian ; it is a demand for a good time here on earth".

"That's a fair *tu quoque*, for you know they accuse *us* of always seeking for new combinations and improvements in material pleasures."

"Well, and they want to share them ; there is something to be said for the poor devils after all," answered another, who was comfortably watching the wreaths of smoke curling from his pipe, as he reclined in the recesses of a velvet arm-chair, dressed in one of those bright coloured garments with which men are fond of adorning themselves in the absence of the other sex with its dainty habiliments.

"He says that my house would be too luxurious for him, and that he is afraid of getting into luxurious ways," remarked Lord Melton, as a few other men dropped in attired in picturesque jackets. "That is more like going in for the ideas of the first martyrs."

“When one comes to think of it it *does* seem, as he says, a trifle queer that the Christian ideal has been so little remembered,” observed another, who considered himself a philosopher. “*Has* the world moved onwards for the better? Isn’t it always a question of backwards and forwards like the waves of the sea—retrogression as often as progression—and all religions retrograding as they die out? We plume ourselves on our allegiance to a certain theory, and we make our compromises for the sake of being comfortable. It was just the same with the ancient Assyrians.”

“We can’t give way to chimeras.”

“Oh, if you come to that, everything was supposed to be a chimera once. It takes a little while to find out whether the chimeras may be truth.” The talk was becoming a little too serious, and some one guided it into a lighter channel by remarking: “But there is such a lot of cant about the whole thing. One has to adapt one’s ideas to the age in which one lives. Call it religion if

you choose, but, all the same, there's selfishness about it. One likes to have a good opinion of oneself, and to ensure the safety of one's own little dirty soul, don't you see?—take out an insurance ticket for the other world ; and all that."

" Most of the folks who prate in sublime fashion disport themselves in luxurious hotels in various parades on the continent where they can't be found out," observed a cynic with a yawn ; " and when they come home they amuse themselves by talking big. Think of the Fabians."

" I must tell Melton how I heard one of them discoursing solemnly the other day," said the first speaker, knocking the ash from his pipe. " It was to the text of 'Call no man lord'. 'The peers,' he said, 'had had their day, and their existence now was only a solemn farce. A life peerage earned by a fellow's own talents and achievements might still be a good thing ; but it was absurd to suppose that a man was any better because his father or his grandfather had done something great. The

hereditary peerage was always an institution which could not have answered long, and now exists only on sufferance. It had vanished in other countries where the nobility showed fight; but here it was different: they would not stand and fight; they always shifted their ground with senile and petulant cries, they would shift it still, and adapt themselves again to their surroundings, preferring surrender to death. We shall have to clip their feathers for them,'" he declared insolently.

"Till it is no more a question of 'wings to bear me over' but a cautious picking of steps," ventured a wit. A laugh went round, in which Lord Melton joined: his position as a democratic aristocrat rather encouraged this sort of chaff than hindered it, and he knew he could always count on the staunch loyalty of the men who valued the privilege of being invited to his house. There were some indeed who hinted that it would have been better for him to have associated more freely with his own set, and that he was unconsciously snobbish in the

importance he attached to position by contrast, and in the complaisance with which he surrounded himself with flatterers as well as humorists: these critics did not hesitate to add that it was a mistake to suppose that snobs were always people who bowed down to others, and that the inherent snobbishness of a man's character might be proved by the worship which he paid to his own rank, however subtle he might be in pretending to undervalue it.

He shook his head now, as if he were weighing the matter, and only laughed more heartily when one of his friends commented bitterly on the wicked policy of the despairing and desperate faction, who cried, “Down with the Lords!” whilst he remarked patronisingly that drastic reform might be needed not only for the Lords but the Commons, and that the Upper House invited criticism like any other human institution.

“In fact, you will agree with those who want to make an Athenæum Club of it,—a chamber of

notables subtracted from the Commons! You will smile benignly and take it quietly whatever they do, though you know that the Upper Chamber is needed for a breakwater to dam up dangerous streams,—a brake necessary for the wheel!" cried an enthusiast on the other side, becoming confused in his similes.

Had Lord Melton answered truly he would have acknowledged that he would agree to anything that did not bore him. But he only said jokingly :—

"We may think ourselves lucky if they don't blow off our heads".

"This becomes interesting," remarked some one in a mock aside. "We had better not tell the women. They will be afraid of being burnt alive in their beds. Dynamite and all the rest of it. Look out for small black bags, and examine pockets for bombs." They drew their chairs together in mock terror, their host entering into the fun, and confessing that it would be "d——d

uncomfortable to be a block in the path of progress".

"Well, Colville is an out-and-outer," he declared, not caring in the outburst of amusement to consider whether or not his words were true. "See. He writes: 'I have always, as you know, sympathised with Gordon, who declared that when he had to endure the horrors of Khartoum his one comfort was that he should be no longer compelled to go to London dinner parties. What should I do at your large place? I shall have to retire to do my work.'"

"Ha, ha! Not out of the priggish stage! He'll have to cast his shell," laughed one of Lord Melton's friends, when this portion of Colville's letter was read aloud in the smoking-room, the fact being kept back that he had written in a humorous strain.

"Reminds me of a devilish good story I heard of another man, a member of the Fabian Society, by-the-bye, and an 'out-and-outer too' you know, who

acted up to his principles. The fellow was a musical critic, and an old lady who was very musical wanted to be kind to him. So she sent him some hot-house flowers. He writes: ‘Let your flowers bloom uncut, or at least do not cut them for *me*’. Next she sends him game, and then he says by return of post: ‘Let your pheasants go unmolested. Do not shoot them for *me*. I hate battues.’ Last of all she invites him to her house, and the man answers: ‘Your ways of living are odious to me; luxury and extravagance are so foreign to all my habits that you must not ask me to share them’.”

The story was received with another burst of laughter, and when it subsided somebody said: “Tackle this artist in another way. Offer him some work, and his private apartments. Can’t you give him a commission?”

“What commission?” It required a little thought, and the good-natured Athenians, who were constantly devising some new thing, put their brains together to invent some novel commission which

should not be too difficult, and, at the same time, different from anything else which had been devised by the various possessors of the stately homes of England. "We must have nothing to do with bribery and corruption," they said jocosely.

The result was another letter which Lord Melton wrote carefully :—

"I want you to do me a favour. When I was last in Rome I was especially struck by the wonderful preservation of a charming little house close by the ruined hills in which Caligula used to play his mad pranks and the great courts in which the Flavian emperors used to give judgment or hold their big dinners, which none of us moderns can equal in luxury. It was at that time to be the House of Livia, but I believe they have changed it now ; it is called the House of Germanicus ; very likely they will change it still, but what matter ?

"A rose would smell as sweet by any other name, and I have a mad freak, as bad as one of Caligula's, to have a copy of that house and court-

yard built in my own grounds for our use in summer. I want, if possible, to have copies of the very paintings on the walls of the two rooms which open out of the courtyard. We can take our afternoon tea or smoke in them in summer. In the hot weather we will imitate the silk awnings, the gold fish and everything else, and in the winter the roof, etc., can be protected by mattings. It will be unique, no one else will have anything like it. And you, who are a bit of an architect as well as a painter, will be the very man to design it for me. You can bring the plans and drawings from Rome, and next spring I will have workmen to carry out your designs. When it is finished, and we sit in it, we shall imagine ourselves near the remains of that wall over which Remus leapt when Romulus had raised it, or that other wall on which Augustus sat, pretending to be a beggar once a year. Most probably I am wrong, but you will coach me, my Gracchus.

“It will be splendid to have you here. You shall have rooms entirely to yourself and shall be fed on

bread and water if it pleases you, and, if you wish it, you shall have a pillar to stand on, like Stylites. Seriously, you will be under no constraint ; and if you will humour me and undertake this thing, I shall be immensely grateful."

Colville pondered over this offer during the days when he lingered on the shores of Sorrento watching the beautiful *mise en scène*, the bay like a sapphire blending with the delicate tints of the olives, which seemed to have been specially designed by nature to modify the too dazzling effect of the blue. He thought as he watched the phantom sails of the lateen boats melting away into the haze of the distance, of the great changes which had taken place in English art since the vitalising writing of John Ruskin, and of the dormant sense of the beauty and fitness of things which had been awakened in the English people. What would his former master say to him, if, for the sake of earning his daily bread and ensuring a little rest and quietness in that England which he was beginning to yearn for

once more, he consented to gratify Lord Melton in his whim?

"Melton exaggerates the extent of his acquaintance with me. It is kind of him to do so; he was charming as a boy, but we were not sworn brothers exactly, and after all we did not see very much of each other at Oxford," said Colville to himself.

Yet the offer was so evidently kind that he hastened to answer the letter. He feared that Melton might afterwards regret spending his money in building a Roman villa. It would be taking a step backwards instead of approaching the whole question of art in the social life of England from its fundamental connection with architectural development. But he had no right to say that anything more unsuited to the atmospheric conditions of our misty island could not possibly have been proposed. He had only to accept the commission. If, as Lord Melton declared, he was weary of the Gothic spirit which he had been falsely told would supply him with infinite suggestion, originality and inventive-

ness ; if he did not care to spend his money on some more original design from a better known artist ; and if he wished for retrograde movements towards the Greek and Roman forms so unsuitable for his climate,—it was no business of Colville's. It was his “not to make reply,” his “not to reason why” or to admit that he hated the idea of the *quasi-classic* being imported to his native shore.

“It would be pleasant enough to be in England for a change,” he declared to himself, as he lingered still longer by the sea, which was not always like a sapphire but sometimes vivid as turquoise, in contrast to the silvery trees which surrounded it, trying to stereotype all the witchery of colour upon his memory, all the brightness and iridescence so difficult to transfer to canvas. Then came a wintry change. The weather was no longer peerless, and the prospect no longer like fairy-land. The hills in the distance, which had been like trembling veils of light, were suddenly blotted out ; the little

villages, dotted here and there with tiny minarets, clock-towers, and toy-like houses, became indistinguishable, for the tints which had been as bright as those in painted missals were now all greys and mother-of-pearls. “The heavens leant low on land and sea.” Vesuvius was covered with snow from top to base; its crest of smoke, instead of being pluckily erect, trailed drearily by its side, like the tail of a dog who is in disgrace; and all the beauties of that glorious country, Capri and Ischia, Naples and the Piano di Sorrento, were blotched into one big smudge of rain and mist.

The boarding-house in which the young men had taken refuge was suddenly discovered to be wretchedly uncomfortable: the fireplaces were very minute, the logs of wood damp and wheezy, the rooms very large, and the nearest places to what little fire could be kindled invariably monopolised by American ladies; the floors were all of stone, the carpets very thin, and each window had its own pet draught.

"Wet weather in places like these must be the peculiar Inferno of the disappointed tourist," Colville remarked to Stephen. "Sorrento looks a thousand times worse than England in the rain. The bright colours of the houses and the costumes of the peasants are all intended for fine weather. Look at the Bay of Naples and its surroundings *now*,—doesn't it remind you of the day after a ball? 'the lights are fled, the garlands dead'."

And they collected their luggage to return to Rome.

CHAPTER XI.

AT MELTON HALL.

THE month of March had set in before Norman Colville felt himself to be sufficiently well prepared to undertake the commission which Melton had given him. His train from London reached the station early in the afternoon. He had wished to arrive quietly at the Hall after his journey, without any fuss being made about his coming. But Lord Melton had forestalled his protests; and one of the well-appointed carriages which was sent to the station to meet visitors and their luggage was waiting in due order for him.

His host had not returned from a fishing expedition, which was one of the ways in which he and his guests killed time; but there was the usual army of servants hanging about the door, some to

conduct the artist to his room, and others to offer to unpack for him and bring him hot water. He had been so long unaccustomed to these luxuries that he was sufficiently ungrateful to grumble about them—characteristically enough to himself (not aloud, for fear of hurting somebody's feelings)—asking what could be the use of all these superfluous flunkeys who were so different from the old retainers, that they had no attachment for the family.

"It is detachment instead, when they are ready to go at a moment's notice, and do not care a pin for their employers," he was privately fuming as he answered, "No, thanks, I don't want any help". The weather was unusually warm for the time of year; so that the short drive from the station had been pleasant enough with its hedge-lined lanes, commanding thoroughly English views of leagues and leagues of fields, and the sunshine lying in streams on grass just now studded with daffodils and a few early primroses. And the avenue by

which the old mansion was approached was just as characteristic, being mainly composed of gigantic elms which were all ancient and some wizened with age. The upward fling of the boughs and the slant here and there of the writhing branches indicated the direction in which the wind blew from the sea, and there was something fresh in the air as if there was a taste of salt in it.

After examining his bedroom in the uncertain light and the pleasant sitting-room which opened out of it, and finding nothing to complain of unless it were the canopied bedstead with embroidered pillows which he was certain he should not find so comfortable as plain ones, Norman seated himself at the window, which he had opened widely to the evanescent sweetness of short-lived flowering hyacinths beneath, and heaved a restful sigh as if he were enjoying his sense of privacy. For the valet had retired, after informing him that dinner was at eight o'clock, but that he had orders to serve Mr. Colville if he preferred it, in his own apartment.

"I have already dined on the road, but I should be glad of a cup of tea," was the unexpected answer. And then, although it was too late to see the landscape, Norman still did not light the candles, but leant his head out of the window, letting the soft greyness of the night atmosphere wrap him round, encircling him and isolating him from the rest of the world. He would have laughed at any one who reminded him that he ought to be tired with his journey. For though he had travelled straight from Rome without a break, his physique was a strong one, and it would have taken a good deal to break it down. But he had his regrets in returning to his own country. Stephen, whose Pompeian picture had been accepted for one of the London winter exhibitions, was still weak in health, and would be thrown on his own resources in a very short time, when the term of his scholarship would be over.

Men spoke of him as a genius in potentiality; but said that he would probably never fulfil his

promise, because of that delicacy of constitution which would prevent him from scoring the sort of success which comes to those who are keen enough to look out for the flow of the tide and to push on at the right moment.

"He will probably overwork himself again, and fall ill without any one to look after him ; and the competition is really terrible," thought Norman, whose passionate interest in toiling humanity had made him take Stephen under his wing, as well as the designing Filomena, who had written again to request more money for her singing lessons at Milan. Then her poor old father, the clever cameo-worker, was still dangerously ill, probably dying ; and there was a sort of blank for Norman in returning to England without being greeted by the kindly face of his half-brother, Thomas Colville.

"If he had only married somebody suitable to his age," he thought. "One can have a sympathy for that sort of thing ; an affection between two oldish people—not talking sentiment to provoke

the laughter of the young, but tenderly united in other ways—is always beautiful. One can believe that even if they have not climbed the hill of life together they can descend it amicably. But it will be horrible if the poor fellow is to be bullied by a young tyrannical wife. It looks bad for her to show that sort of jealousy about the money, as if *I*, of all people in the wide world, care to take it from her."

He was disturbed by the voice of his host, who swore a jovial oath as he stumbled over the threshold of his room in the darkness. It became necessary to strike a light, which revealed Melton—not in keeping with the jovial oath—but looking as young as ever, with womanish skin nearly as white as his carefully arranged necktie—a skin which never seemed to suffer from exposure to the open air. He was an Adonis disguised in dress clothes—even the modern black coat and white shirt-front could not make him look less of an Adonis,—and he was likely to be rather a spoilt one !

For though he talked as if he advocated all sorts of reforms which struck at the roots of many of the traditions most honoured by his caste, the peculiarity of his position seemed to cling to him with the greater tenacity. Norman remembered thinking when they were at Oxford that it would have been better for Melton's character if he had mixed more with his equals. He tried not to resent the odd compound of familiarity and patronage in the young lord's manner when he greeted him, saying :—

“ Oh, I knew we should catch you ; it was only a case of putting enough salt upon your tail ! ”

“ I am afraid the substantial advantages had something to do with the readiness with which I conquered my hesitation,” answered Colville, the vertical fold between his eyebrows accentuating itself as it did sometimes in moments of secret revolt. “ I have to earn my own living now, and I confess I was sometimes a little hard put to it during my wanderings.”

"Come down at once and let us feed you up; you look as if you wanted it."

"Don't stroke my fur the wrong way. I am not to come down unless I find time. You remember that was not in the bond."

"And I am only to have my pound of flesh?"

Then Melton asked with a laugh:—

"Have you grown into a cloistered monk?"

Norman almost feared that he *had*, when he found himself again alone, and congratulated himself on having come to that sequestered spot of the earth—so quiet that the echo of great events would be comparatively slow in reaching it, and where the newspapers and letters, which came only once in the day, would for some time be to him the only record of actors unknown.

He was amused at finding himself enshrined in such magnificence, with a large bronze clock upon the mantelpiece, with Saturn and his scythe; a clock which in mellifluous tones warned of the passing hours, bamboo chairs ornamented with cushions, chintzes

as varied as the colour of Joseph's coat, and a feather bed which stifled him, and got "chucked away" to the furthest corner of the room. Well, he had been promised simplicity; so he hoped to stipulate for an iron bedstead and a mattress; but felt he should be as sour as melancholy Jacques if he were to complain. Outside the house he had simplicity,—if he could call it simplicity when unlimited money had supplied variety in trees as well as in furniture. The hyacinths were not only blooming beneath the window; but there was also a lime-tree, and he flattered himself that he should enjoy it when it was blossoming, and bee-haunted. At one side of the house, the most sheltered side, a stately magnolia grew, which later on would scent the air with waxy clusters of flowers; and the rhododendrons would soon be in gorgeous colour in the plantations, varied by thickets of laurestine and pyracanthus. It was a Paradise spoiled by too many professional gardeners,—but still a Paradise.

In the morning, when he was wakened by the chirp of the chaffinch and the twitter of the linnet beneath his window, and heard the rustle of wings among the twigs, he was thankful to be in England once more.

All the more perhaps because he was still trying to be a landscape painter; and the soft colouring of these English skies with their pale opalescent tints and delicate blue and grey distances might have reminded him of David Cox and Copley Fielding, impressionist though he was.

"Here at least," he wrote to Stephen, "I ought to be quiet and undisturbed, as we poor fussy mortals in this nineteenth century would like to be for our work."

He was just folding up his letter when he had another visit from his host, to ask if he would like to join a riding party which would be starting that afternoon for one of the excursions in the neighbourhood. He answered that it was cruel to tempt him, and added laughingly:—

"Do you remember what Byron said? 'I am

single handed, and must stand alone ; the world being, like Briareus, a very many-handed gentleman.' That was very well for Byron, who had no need to cultivate the Graces, and could pride himself on independence. But *I* have to get my own living, and find it harder than I expected, being naturally a lazy dog. It is most kind of you to have allotted me such a pretty sanctum, instead of the ugly den for which I asked. But it would be kinder still of you not to ask me, to let me stick to my work. You know the sort of life I led at Oxford, and can scarcely understand how different it has been lately. I have bound myself like an apprentice by stringent indentures."

When Lord Melton had gone he added a postscript to the letter.

"It is not such plain sailing as I expected. The position is more complicated than I expected. A dozen memories of Melton as a curly-headed boy rushed on me as he fixed his eyes on me when I tried to explain that my scheme of life had altered

and was different to his, and that I felt disqualified by the circumstances of the case, if not by birth and training, from mixing with his guests. It was always his habit to fix his eyes upon any one with whom he spoke; and just now he surveyed me coolly and critically, looking at me with an amused and half-satirical smile. I remembered how in boyhood that serene suavity of manner used to cover a temper of somewhat uncertain quality, and I could easily understand that he is accustomed to get his way in his own special sphere. I began to have an uncomfortable consciousness that my clothes were ill cut and travel worn, as he placed one of the delicate hands (which reminded me of Tennyson's 'lily-handed peers') just now upon my shoulder, and said, 'I hardly expected such reserve from *you*'. And I was painfully aware of my big boots. How we used to tramp about with them on those stone-paved Italian muleways! I even began to think wildly about trousers-stretchers and boot-trees, as I still said with some obstinacy that

I thought it was my first duty to set to work about the 'house of Germanicus'; but that afterwards, if he thought my isolation unreasonable and wished to wean me from it, I would come down occasionally, if I could do so without interfering with my work."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BETTING IS SUCCESSFUL.

THERE had been more talk about Colville's sudden disappearance from London life and his Utopianism in refusing his brother's fortune than would have been at all agreeable to him, could he have known it. His own idea had been that in retiring altogether from anything like public life his personality would be quickly forgotten. But curiosity had followed him. Some of his friends had credited him with unselfishness and self-sacrifice, whilst others who believed profoundly in the world, its attractions and its pomps, declared that in renouncing a life of pleasure and social importance he had acted merely from pig-headedness. Some of these called him an "ideologist," but a few said he was merely "eccentric". All, however, had been more or less desirous to hear the

end of the story. There had even been betting at Melton Hall as to how soon it would be likely for Lord Melton to succeed in tempting this Diogenes out of his tub. And it soon became apparent that Melton himself was not really in love with his "fads"; he was in no haste to commence building the house of Germanicus.

He made an excuse that in the first place he would like to consult his college friend about various improvements which he proposed making in the old family mansion, which had been added to, like most family houses, by new additions at various times, and had become the oddest mixture of styles and periods.

The grey stone roof once knocked to pieces by Cromwell's cannon had been built up again in a medley of architecture, grotesque and absurd. Some of Melton's friends advised him to pull down the west parts of the house, and restore them, as far as possible, in the taste of the times before the "arch destroyer" had battered at the walls. But only the

mullions of one great window remained uninjured, and Colville found that he should have a difficulty in identifying the exact skeleton of the ancient pile.

The difficulty, as he pointed out, would be to know where to begin, and where to end. And who would have the heart to interfere with the broad terrace with its Italian balustrades, and the statues which the former owner brought from Italy, all unfitted though they were for the climate of that gloomier country? Pope and Addison might have liked them, but they were not in keeping with the architecture of the old façade.

It was polyglot; it was horrible. Yet Colville had scarcely the heart to tell Melton so, especially when, at the hour of twilight, Althea Le Geyt—that was the name of Lord Melton's betrothed—lingered, like another Juliet, on that terrace.

The first time Norman saw her she bowed to him, and he was a little too ready to fancy that the bow was stiff and cold, as if to a poor painter,

from a high-born damsel, the quality of whose blood has been distilled and refined from generation to generation. For afterwards he had to admit how mistaken he was in that idea, since report said that Melton was marrying the girl for her stately style of beauty ; and that, though the mother laid claim to blood as blue as his, there were gossips who did not hesitate to laugh at her as an adventuress. Adventuress or not, the daughter's appearance was so uncommon that the second time when Norman met her, on which occasion she murmured a few civilities, he found himself longing to take her portrait. She wore a green and gold gown, which somehow reminded him of a picture by Velasquez in one of the palaces at Genoa. The long straight folds accentuated the statuesque lines of her figure ; and when they told him that it was one of the new-fashioned gowns that had come in with afternoon tea, and which left more opportunity for loose artistic folds and mediæval embroidery, he did not revolt against the

unnecessary extravagance, as in consistency he ought to have revolted.

In reality he could no more wish to do away with it than with the useless Italian statuary. In truth, as he had confessed to his brother Thomas, he was an odd combination of qualities—his artistic instincts conflicted with his desires for reform, with his modernity.

He soon began to feel as if he were idling his time, and to wish that Melton would be more in earnest about the work he had engaged him to do.

It seemed like tomfoolery to be lingering in this way. For how could he hope to begin the frescoes till the builders set to work at the walls of the house? Sometimes, indeed, he could make a few sketches on his own account. The window of his sitting-room, or his studio, whatever they choose to call it, looked over the deer park. It was the first time he had an opportunity of studying deer, and the young fronds of the bracken made a capital foreground. They gave him pleasure of a new

kind—in its way it was intense. One old fellow with magnificent antlers was fond of posing himself in a tempting position beneath a fine old oak-tree.

He had told Thomas that he was dreamy, and on some of these occasions it seemed to him that he had been purposely fooled in order that the dreaminess should be developed in his character.

More than a fortnight passed in this way, and he felt as if he might sit idly musing till his identity, as Irene had prophesied, became merged in a sort of Nirvana. Beneath his bedroom windows there was already “a soft eye music of slow waving boughs, powerful almost as vocal harmony”.

Instead of the hyacinths the lilac was budding, and there were pink and blue hydrangeas, where by-and-by the St. John’s wort with large staring heads would be gazing at him and reproaching him for his laziness.

He chafed against the enforced inertia, and envied Stephen still plodding away in Italy.

Sometimes he told himself that it was stupid of him to have allowed himself to be brought in contact with an irresponsible young patrician who was not to be blamed for the habits produced by generations of aristocrats. Of course, it had to be taken for granted that Melton's peaches should be better than the peaches belonging to any one else. And he tried to prevent himself from thinking how curious it was to see how the young lord played at being a Radical, talking all the time of other human beings in the neighbourhood who did not belong to the county society as if they were geological specimens or odd-looking sea anemones on the pebbly shore, instead of being living men and women.

It was hopeless to make Melton understand that anything belonging to him was not perfection.

When Norman said, "It is useless to interfere with the exterior of this house ; it may be interesting archæologically, but it will never be much of a show place architecturally," his face fell. And he

began immediately to consult his artist friend about the interior. That was just as curious a muddle, with *parquet* floors and tiger skins on the floors, Arabian scimitars, mediæval swords, Scotch clay-mores, some old armour on the walls, and collections of antique watches, gold snuff-boxes and bronze coins strewn about on marble tables.

He said something of the kind, and then had to draw in his horns, aware that he had offended his host.

That was the last thing he had intended to do, having wished to keep on good terms with Melton, who had his points and was a fair debater, a general favourite everywhere, and moderately well read, if to be posted up in the last new books was to be well read. Lord Melton had plenty of conversation ; but Norman hated his ideas about women, just as he hated the indifferent way in which he spoke about the time when the joy bells would ring for his marriage with the beautiful girl who was to be thrown in amongst his other possessions.

Already Melton talked as if she belonged to him ; and when (after being consulted about the house) Colville commented on the number of superfluous bedrooms, he answered lightly : "We shall give plenty of house parties ; you don't suppose we shall go in for endless *tête-à-têtes*".

No one would have supposed it. For Melton seemed to pay almost equal attention to the other young women who were visiting at the house, and who constantly pandered to his amusement. When Colville was at work in his little sitting-room his attention was often attracted by a sound of the tramping of horses' hoofs, a noise of laughter and of merry voices. If he rose and looked out of the window he would often see the men helping the girls to dismount, amongst whom Lord Melton's *fiancée* always looked graceful, but seemed to be quieter than the rest. It was a pretty sight to watch the riders set off for their rides ; and by-and-by, during the summer weather, he was told that *al fresco* luncheons would be spread for them under

chestnut-trees or gnarled old oaks, the elder ladies driving to meet the younger ones in a waggonette, and the servants unpacking the provisions and waiting on them as they sat on the grass.

The anchorite began to think that he would like to join in these expeditions. He admitted that the picnics must be charming, though he added to himself that he, for his part, would not like a married life which had always to be led *alfresco*, a perpetual *vie de fête*, with no privacy and no retirement for thought. It set him thinking about the marriage question, which was becoming one of the most important questions of the day. He had always hated to think of the marriages made for money and for other selfish ends, and of the many who were straining at the chains which held them together, knowing that they had nothing in common, and longing to do away with the tie. In this mood he wrote to Stephen: "Steve, my boy, you and I will certainly remain bachelors!"

After a time these letters became fewer and

fewer. For the strain in the situation did not lessen. The builders had arrived, and were taking advantage of the fine weather to build the house of Germanicus under Colville's direction. But the work was an unusual one, and proceeded slowly. It was evident that Norman could not paint the frescoes till the walls were not only finished but dry. And when the weather suddenly changed and rain began to fall, the time for the more serious part of his work seemed to be farther off than ever.

"Anything to please you ; but I don't see why you should keep up the burlesque of being a prisoner," said Lord Melton, when the artist answered : "I am perfectly contented ; I am in clover".

"Come down and help to amuse us. You used to be a musician as well as painter. We are getting up some part songs, and if the rain continues we talk of play-acting. You used to be a capital amateur actor—and would make a good stage manager."

There was a tone of authority in the frequently reiterated invitation, which made Norman wince and then remind himself that he was, as he said, in clover, and being paid for doing nothing.

"I will come," he answered. And thus the bets were won.

The look of fatigue on his strong pale face, contracted from the way in which he had devoted himself to Stephen Dillwyn during the long months of wandering in Italy, had worn off by this time. Lord Melton, who chuckled at having gained his way, recognised the marked individuality of the man, in spite of the air which was so unassuming, and knew at once that he could not help influencing the other people in the house. But he had succeeded in asserting himself; and the artist, who had surrendered a fortune to a necessity which had hold of his ardent nature—a necessity which was as imperative and perhaps as mistaken as Shelley's necessity for atheism—might possibly be amenable in his turn to other influences.

At any rate he might prove to be a new sensation both to the bachelor friends whom Lord Melton after great persuasion had induced to join him when he determined to spend the entire spring in the country, or to the women who were never satisfied unless they were asking “what shall we do to-day? or, what shall we plan for to-morrow?”

CHAPTER XIII.

A CASTLE OF INDOLENCE.

THE experience was not a new one to Norman Colville. He had already had the opportunity of mixing with a society relieved from the problem of providing for its material sustenance: some of its members sinking into idle torpor, some yachting, shooting, hunting, or varying the routine by an occasional voyage round the world, or a visit to Monte Carlo if not to the Rocky Mountains. The problem for the men as well as for the women lay in crowding the keenest amount of enjoyment into a few years of existence. The question was whether in attempting to do so they did not lose the first essentials of happiness.

That question had all along been an interesting one to him; and he felt that he had full oppor-

tunities for putting it to himself once more as he watched with those well-trained eyes which took in everything, without seeming to observe, in a manner which could not have been annoying to any one. He tried not to obtrude his own poverty any more than his own theories, for fear of spoiling the pleasure of other people. He had determined not to be a blot upon the harmonious whole : it being fortunate that though he was simple in his dress he had never really let slovenliness grow upon him. Stephen's clothes were always crumpled, and looked greasy with splotches of paint directly he put them on ; and he wore his hair long. But that unkempt effect was from old habit distasteful to Norman Colville ; and those who looked for eccentricities did not find them in him. It was too easy indeed to accommodate himself to the old groove, with the lotus eater sensation of enjoyment, as week after week slipped by with a tempting *menu* of amusements provided for the wet days, as well as the fine ones. He began to feel as if

the world were slipping from his grasp. The spring weather when the rain abated proved to be so beautiful that he felt as if they were like children wandering in leafy glades, with no fear of hunger, or cold, or sickness, and never looking forward to the shadowy future. The carol of birds stirring in their nests woke them in the mornings, alluring them to the dim green recesses of the garden, and the breakfast table was adorned with dainty blossoms. As if the powdered auriculas and forget-me-nots growing in the open air were not sufficient for their wants, the hot-houses were rifled for roses and curious orchids, and boxes of flowers arrived daily from Nice and Mentone. It seemed to Norman as if they almost equalled the luxury of ancient Rome even in their bath-rooms. One of Melton's fads (which was certainly a pretty one) was to provide a swimming bath with silver water streaming over shining marble; and he had consulted Norman about the possibility of introducing mosaic pavements for

the floor of the adjacent dressing-room, regretting that it was impossible to procure porphyry and silken awnings.

All this jarred with the principles professed by the young artist. And yet there was none of the hurry-skurry of London life, and none of the vulgarity induced by living at a gallop.

No room was more luxurious than the smoke-room provided for the men, in which—young as Melton was—he had already begun to indulge in a comfortable after-dinner simmer.

The decorations were Japanese and scarcely suitable, but at times Lord Melton talked of a Pompeian smoke-room by way of a change, though he admitted that he was weary of “æsthetic salvation”.

Norman did not wonder. If he had thought it worth while to argue with his host, he would have told him that all this was as unsuitable for the English climate, and as demoralising for his taste, as his comical idea of imitating a Roman house,

and importing everything foreign into his estate. Norman himself grew weary of gazing at the Japanese birds, flowers and fish for a good part of every evening. It was usually late when the men decided to adjourn to the splendours of the drawing-room,—a room loaded with bric-à-brac, volumes of poems, and music scattered about the tables and sofas. Nobody read the poems, and the amateur music was decidedly poor ; yet nobody could have had the heart to abuse it, any more than one could have the heart to interfere with the polyglot architecture of this Castle of Indolence, which Norman had refused to lay hands on.

“Let it be out of keeping, it is better than murdering it,” said the artist, who had felt it just as hopeless to attempt to exile the big looking-glass with carved scrolls, or the furniture afflicted with curvature of the spine, which had been handed down to Melton from his forbears. It was useless to interfere with the hotch-potch of mediæval renaissance and oriental taste.

"Try and look upon it as a museum of curiosities," he advised.

After a little while he himself got to like it, as it was full of the pathos of past times. He liked the faded tapestry and the dumb things of wood and iron, many of them in bad taste, but all marking different epochs.

There was the same odd sort of incongruity about the amateur music. The pretty little girl who played the violin every night, and who evidently put herself on the same platform as Norman Neruda, was so accustomed to be applauded that, as she looked round with appealing eyes, Norman found himself joining in the clapping, in spite of the false notation which had just been jarring on his ears.

The men were nearly all young. Some of them were inclined to be sycophants, but there were pleasant fellows amongst them. Most of them were more or less pleasant to look at, and belonged to that type of young Englishmen which the discipline and training of our public schools turn out by the

hundred. So far as appearances went, it was impossible not to admire that perfection of ease which Frenchmen have learnt to envy in the well-groomed and well-turned-out men of our nation.

If the conventional costume was inartistic it was studied with such care that its ugliness was redeemed by an art which was concealed, and therefore in its way consummate art. But where was the brilliant talk which seems to have disappeared into limbo like the jests of those professional jesters which in the old days were sometimes in doubtful taste, and therefore the less to be regretted?

They toyed with all sorts of things. At one time the conversation would turn upon Torguenief and Tolstoi, Ibsen and Björnson; at another time it was Newman and Manning, Hurrell Froude and the prospects of the present Ritualist party; and at yet another, it was Buddhism and the Parsees, or Gautama's precepts about becoming good. But nothing was taken up in sober earnestness. Neither would it have been "good form" to be without a

touch of questioning agnosticism. But the *raffinement* of these young men was carried to such a degree that though every question under the sun could be discussed with a cynicism which amounted to irony, one had to avoid anything which was apparently vulgar or coarse. You handled impure literature with kid gloves. You could be downright about nothing.

Lord Melton shared in the general decadence, if it was fair to call this semi-sceptical, fastidious, and cynical state of things, one of decadence. He had begun by being in earnest, but was now in earnest about nothing. He had ended by becoming a very good specimen of a certain type—the sort of man who was likely to grow more and more indifferent as he went on in life, and to die with a sneer on his lips. He was bent on amusing himself, and yet already tired of the world, and continually looking out for something new. The genial curves of the mouth were already being spoilt ; and, in spite of the pink and white skin, and almost womanish beauty, there

was a hardness and cynicism about the face which made Norman fear for the future of the beautiful girl who had entrusted herself to his care.

Was Norman hard in his turn when he sometimes felt as if he had been snared and taken prisoner under false pretences, and kept, like a well-fed gladiator, to make sport for the rich man's friends? Some one had told him that the newest fashionable novelty would be to introduce prize-fighters into drawing-rooms to amuse the spectators after dinner.

The joke had scarcely amused him; but he began to be rather sore, and to feel that he had been dragged into a false position when day after day the builders dawdled, as if purposely, at their work; and he knew that at this rate the walls of the little summer-house would never be ready for his frescoes. He remonstrated with his patron, and told him that he could not promise to remain after the contract was ended. It had been signed

for six months, and was likely, at this rate, to drag on for eight.

Melton put him off with an easy excuse ; and Colville, for the first time, felt himself growing impatient with the glib excuses of a fellow who was so courteously facile that you could not quarrel with him, and whose outward man was so spick and span that one was reminded of the ermine said to mourn over a spot on its delicate fur.

He could not help feeling that after the hard life he had been leading in Italy this luxurious existence was by no means calculated to strengthen his fibre.

Theoretically he objected to superfluous luxury ; but practically the afternoon teas, with heavy cream, fragrant bohea, and cakes and biscuits which were a triumph of confectionery handed in antique silver dishes or plates of delicate Venetian glass by pretty tapered jewelled fingers, was pleasant enough during the summer weather.

Food only fit for Ariel, he called it. And equally pleasant was it to recline in the softest of easy-chairs, amidst the mellow light of shaded candles and the odour of pot-pourri in the flower-laden drawing-room, filled with curios of all kinds, *marqueterie* furniture, Indian idols, and azaleas blooming on the hearth with a background of old Dutch tiles, where fine logs on brass dogs had been burning in the evenings when he first arrived. He had quite ceased to find fault with its artistic inconsistencies.

But perhaps pleasantest of all were the terrace walks, on which he could fancy figures walking in Elizabethan costume some hundreds of years before, and where Althea was wont to linger till the last sunset's tints disappeared.

He had to make the best of the long dinners, with the various dishes adapted from the best *cuisines* of Europe, and was forced to try and forget that he objected to old ladies wearing sparkling diamonds which made their faded eyes

look the duller. For women had always taken him into their confidence; and his present experience was no exception to the rule.

There was the old-young lady, who regaled him with tales about her conquests; and the stout middle-aged woman, who often sat next to him at dinner, and was always discoursing about her grievances. It all came, as he decided, from having nothing to do, and indulging in that form of untruthfulness which leads people to imagine themselves to be martyrs. And yet what right had he to complain when everything was made so pleasant for him?

He had not the least excuse for resenting the fibs which deceived nobody, not even the women who uttered them, being the small change of their daily intercourse; or for feeling vexed because these fashionable dames spoke with the perfect *aplomb* of their long social training, assuming the varying tones of voice which they reserved for each different specimen of his sex, so that he told him-

self it would be impossible to know them as they really were. Some of them prided themselves on their culture; and yet it was difficult to conceal a laugh at the quaint mistakes which they made when they got beyond their depth.

How could it be otherwise when their knowledge was generally picked up in conversation, and they had so little time to read?

His former training as the heir presumptive of a considerable fortune had familiarised him with various types of the younger women. Neither their pretty dresses, their graceful confidences, their imitation of men's ways, their giddiness, nor their affected indifference, were at all new to him; but it was amusing to see them under quite another aspect now that he was altogether out of it,—a man who could not count in the matrimonial lottery and no longer worth jealousies or emulations.

The elder women were in some ways more interesting. There was a dear old lady, an aunt of Lord Melton's on his mother's side, who continually

resided with him and acted chaperon, having done so since the death of his mother. Mrs. Armitage was a general favourite, kind and forbearing to the young ones, and sympathetic over their love affairs —her sympathy in some cases being rather exaggerated. She had no objection to sacrificing herself, even to the extent of wearing a low-cut bodice, for the sake of “these girls” when it was necessary for “these girls” to be introduced at Court. And at Melton Hall she dispensed kindly hospitality, sometimes in the garden enthroned in a basket chair, and sometimes in the drawing-room surrounded by youth and beauty.

Mrs. Armitage wore her old age magnificently. Her eye had not lost its brightness, and her contours, if amplified, were not excessively so ; whilst the delicate rings of her white hair adorned a forehead which was scarcely wrinkled. It had been said that Lord Melton delayed his settling in life partly because she made him so comfortable, by her habit of objecting to nothing, and helping

everything to go smoothly under the present *régime*.

Of quite another type was Mrs. Le Geyt, the mother of the bride-elect. The two women were foils to each other, a constant contrast. Mrs. Le Geyt's hair was still dark, the lines of her mouth more set, and her carriage proud. Those who disliked her thought her domineering ; but she was a woman of the world, modern to her finger tips, with far more influence over her future son-in-law than the kindly old aunt. Perhaps he was a little afraid of her, and unable to give a clear account even to himself of how somehow or another he had emerged from the state when every mother and every girl had been looking after him. He was glad enough to be out of it ; for it had seemed to him that men situated as he was could never know these *débutantes* as nature had made them, their fate having cut them off from intimate communion with their kind. Lord Melton had long given up attempting to make friends of the other

sex, amusing himself instead with his horses and his dogs, as well as the chatter of numbers ; there was safety in such chatter. He was delighted with the dainty perfection of Althea's vivid personality ; but the girls who joined in the fishing expeditions, and gave little cries of joy mingled with squeals of horror if they happened to catch a fish, were decidedly more amusing.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALTHEA TAKES PAINTING LESSONS.

IT might have been amusing enough to be a “chiel amang them takin’ notes,” if Norman Colville had not been so thoroughly an outsider that he continually pulled himself up with the reminder that nothing is more easy than to caricature the opinions of your opponents. Even Mrs. Le Geyt, whose devices he had watched with considerable amusement, and whom he thought of as a female Talleyrand and Rochefoucauld rolled into one, did not think it necessary to warn any one against him.

“Most men,” as she said patronisingly, “passed through the stage of Republican boyhood at their public schools, and the craze had only come to Mr. Colville a little later.”

It was mildly hinted that he should have got the
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measles over when he was young,—a speech which savoured of Thomas. But Mrs. Le Geyt was far too clever to allow herself to be afraid of him.

The fact that he had emptied himself of all his worldly goods put him so entirely *hors de combat* in any question of matchmaking, that she never thought of wasting her crafty diplomatism on him.

But, oh ! the joy of that fertile land with breezes tempered by the salt breath of the sea wafted from over the gorse-clad hills, where he wandered with his paint-box and easel ! Sometimes he tried to study the gnarled and twisted trunks of the old oaks with their roots laid bare, and clinging to the little earth left for them over the deep roadways. There was a sentiment about them, a deep emotion, but an emotion which too often eluded him like that which was at the heart of all things. And there was a sense of tranquillity, restorative to both mind and body, in trying to paint the little streams rippling and gurgling over the stones. It was only brown water flowing onwards to the sea, with

the pebbles clearly mirrored beneath the umbers and siennas. And the level pastures beyond were nothing out of the common, with the opal tints of the distant ocean, the delicate forms of the shadowy coast outlined by the foam.

He was ready to laugh at himself for feeling that these things went far to make a whole, and to conduce to what Wordsworth calls,

That perfect mood
In which the burden and the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight,
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened.

Several members of the “house party” would soon be leaving for the London season, but it was a fad of Lord Melton’s to stay at the Hall that year on through the summer months. It was, as he said to his male friends, his last year of freedom and bachelorhood.

Of the guests who were likely to remain most were still enjoying themselves with riding and

fishing, or with playing golf and lawn tennis ; walks, that could only be undertaken in polished leather boots, or shoes with pointed toes, through the grounds and adjacent meadows, being the only ones congenial to many of the girls, who were like pieces of delicate porcelain, made of a finer clay than everyday pottery.

There was, however, one curious exception ; it was that of Miss Le Geyt. At first Norman's humorous enjoyment of the mother's character had extended almost unconsciously to a like estimate of the daughter. The mother's tactics were a cumulative system of elaborate strategy ; but he made plenty of excuses for her by telling himself that these tactics were the natural protection of the weak against the strong, the fencing of the oppressed with the oppressor, handed down through successive generations of women during the ages when they had to try by their natural instincts to circumvent the tyranny of their masters. He hated tyranny so much that he was almost inclined to

chuckle to himself when he watched the system of reprisals of which Melton was quite unaware, and saw him succumb in the most helpless way to the clever artifices of the *belle mère*.

It was easy to prophesy how in the future she would hold the whip hand over him—always with the pretence of considering the victim's comforts. The faculty of self-protection which had been evolved in women of her sort was more or less inseparable from a certain amount of hypocrisy. And it was quite safe to back a clever woman like Mrs. Le Geyt against a man who lacked energy like Lord Melton, who lent a ready ear to flattery, and had what Norman considered to be the inertia of an exhausted race.

He had even gone so far as to think that Melton was to be pitied in the hands of two unscrupulous, manœuvring women. But by degrees he was beginning to see that the girl had nothing in common with her mother. There was evidently no scheming or manœuvring on *her* part. The

big pupils of her eyes, veiled by long lashes, had a look of reflective thought ; and the brows themselves were modelled more delicately than her mother's—also possibly by the influence of that reflection. Otherwise he could form no opinion at all about her ; the polite indulgence of her manner keeping him at arm's length.

It was one of Melton's instincts to like to see her beautifully dressed ; and gossip said—that gossip which Norman hated—that Melton himself defrayed the cost incurred by the continual changes of her fresh and delicate costumes. Norman hoped that it was not so ; somehow the thought of it jarred upon him—just as it jarred upon him to hear it whispered that neither Melton nor Althea Le Geyt could explain the process by which they woke up one fine morning and found their engagement what Thomas Colville would have called a “fate accomplished”.

“One need not inquire into these things,” he said, reasoning as an artist, as he looked at Althea.

He only knew that in her dress of white llama—mystic, wonderful,—with golden girdle, it was as if the colouring of the white lily had been studied even to the golden glow of its stamens; and that in her slim youthfulness, with her silvery unmoved voice, with no studied society intonations, no fast slang, and no affected manner, this girl had all the charm of an unwritten poem.

Whether the match proposed was a wise one or not, and whether the woman in this case would be able to set herself to the man, “like perfect music unto noble words,” was not for him to speculate about. Melton’s manner to her was a little forced. His politeness to women was too adorned with fine words; it was too elaborate, and had an air about it of not being genuine. But that also was not Norman Colville’s affair.

One night she had appeared in some rich dark material, for the day had been wet, and it was a trifle colder. He did not know if the dress were of velvet or plush, but it had rich bronze tints which

formed a fitting background to the colour of her abundant hair. It seemed to be trimmed with old Venetian point, priceless no doubt, and, as more than one other girl remarked, "a good deal too old for her". Yet it made a perfect picture.

He tried to think of her sister seamstresses, with twisted fingers and hollow cheeks, wearing out their lives in dusty rooms with a dismal outlook on chimney pots, working at such dresses. But, do what he would to prevent it, his mind recurred to the picture—a picture possibly with no more heart in it than George IV. when Thackeray described him as "waistcoats, waistcoats and nothing underneath"! How did he know that there was any heart beneath these artistic dresses? Yet she had a lovely throat and beautiful shoulders. A figure painter like Stephen would no doubt rave about the effect. Lord Melton watched the artist's eyes as they followed his bride-elect.

"Yes, she is an exquisite creature," he said, speaking the other man's thoughts aloud. "I was

quite sure that *you*, who are a connoisseur in beauty, would see it. But she is so far beyond the vulgar herd that I do not expect the common run of humanity to appreciate her."

He chuckled as he said this, priding himself on his superior taste, just as he might have congratulated himself if he had bought a rare Titian or Vandyck. But the instant he perceived how he jarred upon his listener, he shifted his ground. It was ridiculous of Colville to be offended with him; it was thin-skinned and over-fastidious, when *he*, on his side, tried so hard not to seem patronising.

The walls of the house of Germanicus were nearly dry, and Norman hoped to begin painting on them very soon.

Meanwhile the charming home scenery, which was as delightful to him as one of nature's *tours de force* in her scenes of tragic grandeur, drew him often to a distance.

And on one of these long walks he was taken by

surprise at the sight of a tall, delicate, and somewhat familiar figure, dressed no longer in flowing robes, but in a neat skirt fit for walking, and long Swede gloves, one hand laden with flowers. Miss Le Geyt wore a large hat, which made her look like one of Gainsborough's pictures, and the eyebrows, arching the dreamy eyes under the shadow of the hat, lent them an intensified depth of colour. She spoke to him in passing; but, whether it was still his fancy or not, there was something in the tone of her voice which sounded cold, as if she addressed him against her will. What did it matter, if, when he met her in another walk, she looked like a Morland in a plain straw hat, and plainer costume of untinted tussore silk, which draped in capital folds? She was simply a picture: he did not yet know enough about her to describe her as a living woman. She shook hands with him, less stiffly than before. "Idiot that I was to feel a flush of crimson shame which might show even on my sunburnt cheek, and to be

obliged to stoop my head that she might not notice it!" he said angrily to himself.

It was the foolish pride, which he had not yet conquered.

He resented the polite indulgence of her manner as she said: "I am glad to meet you sometimes walking out, Mr. Colville. You devote yourself too much to your work. It is not good for you." Such a style of speech would have been more suitable to a woman who was double her age. And he was still inclined to resent it when for the first time she tried to enter into conversation with him. Her polish and courtesy, her tact and readiness, struck him as different to the superficial information of the half-educated girls with whom he had so often been brought in contact that a new enjoyment of the unexpected came upon him. He could not help being amused at the little air of authority with which she said: "I hope you will make a good many improvements in the house.

We rely upon you, but of course you must not overwork yourself."

"My function is work," he answered with a twinkle in his eye which he hoped she would not think was meant to be at her expense. He tried to cover it by adding with a touch of raillery: "The world is made up of working bees, and those beautiful, golden, idle ones which we artists long to paint".

"So you find your work enjoyable?"

"Certainly; I always enjoy my work." And then he scarcely knew why he added: "There are various kinds of work: there is work without interest or hope, as in a convict prison; or the work of men who toil from morning to night without the expectation of saving something for their old age. I cannot say that I should enjoy *that*; one does not like to think of it when one has seen the decay and squalor of their homes, the harassing uncertainty of their toil, and the constant fear of undeserved misfortune which haunts them."

"Oh," she answered indulgently, and still, as he fancied, a little coldly, "I have heard you are an enthusiast about all these things. One is always glad to recognise generous aims."

He was strengthened in the idea that she was one of the golden bees. It was impossible to resist the thought that Melton Hall must be pleasant enough as a residence for herself and her mother, and that neither she nor Mrs. Armitage seemed at all anxious to alter the existing state of things.

If Miss Le Geyt chose to amuse herself by any sort of recreation, it was as well to humour her in her whim. But he did not believe she could be in earnest. And he was taken by surprise when Lord Melton asked him to give lessons in painting to this proud maiden. It seemed that she dabbled in art, and had tried to fudge out painting from Nature for herself. Norman was not encouraging. He and Stephen both felt strongly that people should *not* dabble in art. They should specialise,

especially in this age of competition. And a woman who had chosen her vocation, and had decided to go in for matrimony—intending in the future to fill her house with guests—was surely mad to think of taking lessons. She would never do anything. He stammered, and tried to hint at his opinion in the euphemisms necessitated by courtesy.

But Melton would not be withheld. He was inclined to be confidential. He positively told Colville how he had been promised that the engagement should be kept a secret; and how, in spite of this solemn promise, the affair had oozed out—through the imprudent confidences of Mrs. Le Geyt; and how he had found himself engaged to the girl before all the world—with the engagement announced in the society papers. “No wonder when the dowager confided it all to her friends! That woman is sometimes a little too much for me!” he added, with a sort of laugh.

“Oh yes, he was a fortunate man,” he admitted

to Norman ; "she was just the sort of girl to blush at the right moment, and do the regulation thing required of her. She would be grand as a wife and matron ; and if there was something of the iceberg in her composition, nothing could be better for the position she would be required to fill."

"I don't want a wife who goes in for skirt-dancing, smokes cigarettes, and carries a betting book in her pocket—that's the sort of thing which palls on one in our days," he said ; "it is nice to find a girl who looks as dignified as Hermione on her pedestal. Rather silent, you say ; but she can talk pretty well for a woman when she pleases, though she knows when to be silent in a dignified way."

Norman had not spoken ; but by all this he inferred that Melton had had no experience of subtle sympathies, naïve confidences, or the ingenuous expression of fresh girlish thoughts ; and yet, if Miss Le Geyt's pathetic style of beauty did not belie her, she ought to have been capable of

all these things. On the rare occasions when Lord Melton sat near to his *fiancée* he looked like the embodiment of chivalry. Every inflection of his voice and tone were perfect ; but after confidences of this sort Norman Colville began to doubt if he really cared for her. He was vexed with himself for questioning whether every emotion had not been smothered and exhausted in him by artificial growth of all sorts, till the real thing no longer existed.

Perhaps he wronged him when he was disposed to distrust him, and when he allowed himself to be prejudiced by that something in his face which made him feel as if this man, so flattered and admired, was like a bit of suspect coin which one would like to ring to find out if it were true metal, in spite of the glitter of its polish.

His physique was so fine that it would take long for it to deteriorate; longer still for the evil ancestral tendencies, said to be in his family, to develop.

To do him justice, Colville had to admit that he

had seen no signs of them at present. Once or twice he had fancied that his host's voice was a little thickened after long sessions in the smoking-room over brandy and soda ; but not noticeably so. Brandies and soda had taken the place of the old port wine, of which gentlemen of the older school drank their quarts ; and Norman wondered if they were as likely to sow the seeds of gout, and of other diseases. The grandfathers could not compound for their pleasant vices by a trip to Carlsbad or Wiesbaden. And brandy and soda was a pleasant enough drink, serving to pass the time when the women were making dressing-gown appointments for brushing their hair and chattering in their bed-rooms.

To keep off such thoughts he buckled to his work.

He had now the advantage of fine weather to go on with the frescoes on the house, which he had imitated, as exactly as possible, from those in Rome. It was a queer anachronism. Meantime the sketching

had been progressing. Sometimes he and his pupil found charming bits of the older part of the house to study, with groined roofs or quaintly sculptured gargoyle. Sometimes there was the curve of the towing path by the river with the rising ground above it, where Mrs. Armitage accompanied them, and by degrees the barrier of reserve wore off between them. It was impossible to keep up stand-offishness when they were so constantly thrown together.

Miss Le Geyt worked with a will, and proved to be wonderfully quick and apt as a pupil. Her receptive faculties were great, and she had a face which was rather puzzling to one who could watch the varying emotions in it like ripples passing over the surface of a stream, with quiet and yet subtle changes of both expression and colouring. Her conversation was just as puzzling, broken first of all by awkward silences, and conveying a sense that she was patronising. But when something dissolved the ice between them and roused her

merry young laughter it was impossible to keep so much on the stilts. From that time they met each other on more equal ground ; yet there were occasions when Norman wished he had not been asked to give these lessons.

He tried to keep up the fiction that first impressions were correct, and that it was natural for him to feel dislike for the daughter of such a mother. Sometimes he was conscious of sympathy, but more often of antagonism. What could this petted darling, with the cordon drawn round her to keep off any unpleasantness, know of life or nature ? She was inconsistent ; but the inconsistencies did not strike her. She had been brought up to one way of looking at things, and did not see that she was inconsistent.

And yet it was strange that they should agree in the sort of contempt which both of them felt for that hateful struggle after riches which too often assumes abnormal developments. In that surely she was amazingly inconsistent. And when she

spoke of it with scorn and a sententiousness odd for one so young, it was impossible to help remembering that she herself would have everything which gold could procure—security against inconveniences, gratifications for all her tastes, and the maximum of pleasure and excitement in her life with the minimum of fatigue.

“Is it possible that she is a skilful actress, and, if so, what good can be secured by her acting?” Norman asked himself, more puzzled than ever.

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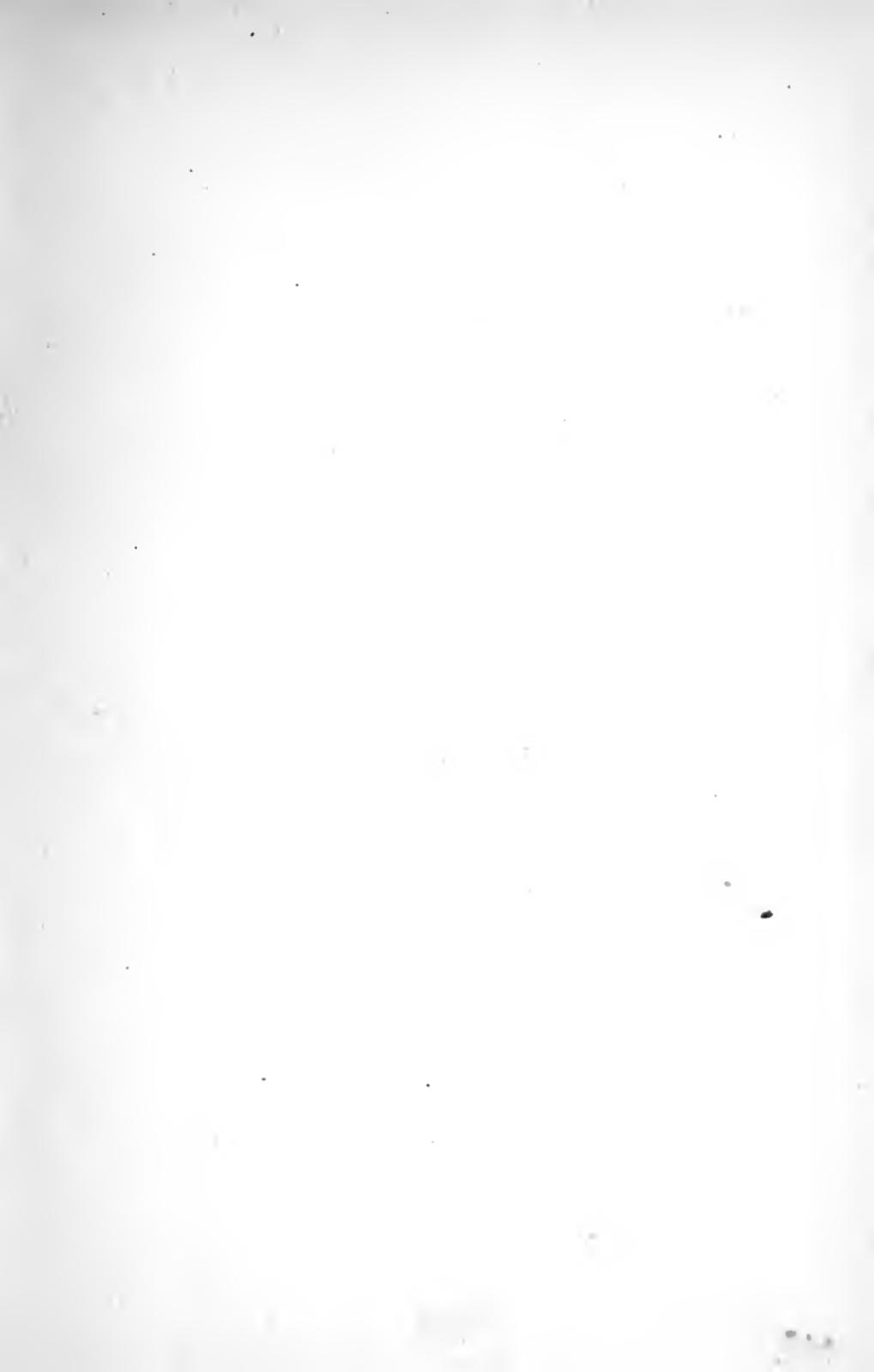
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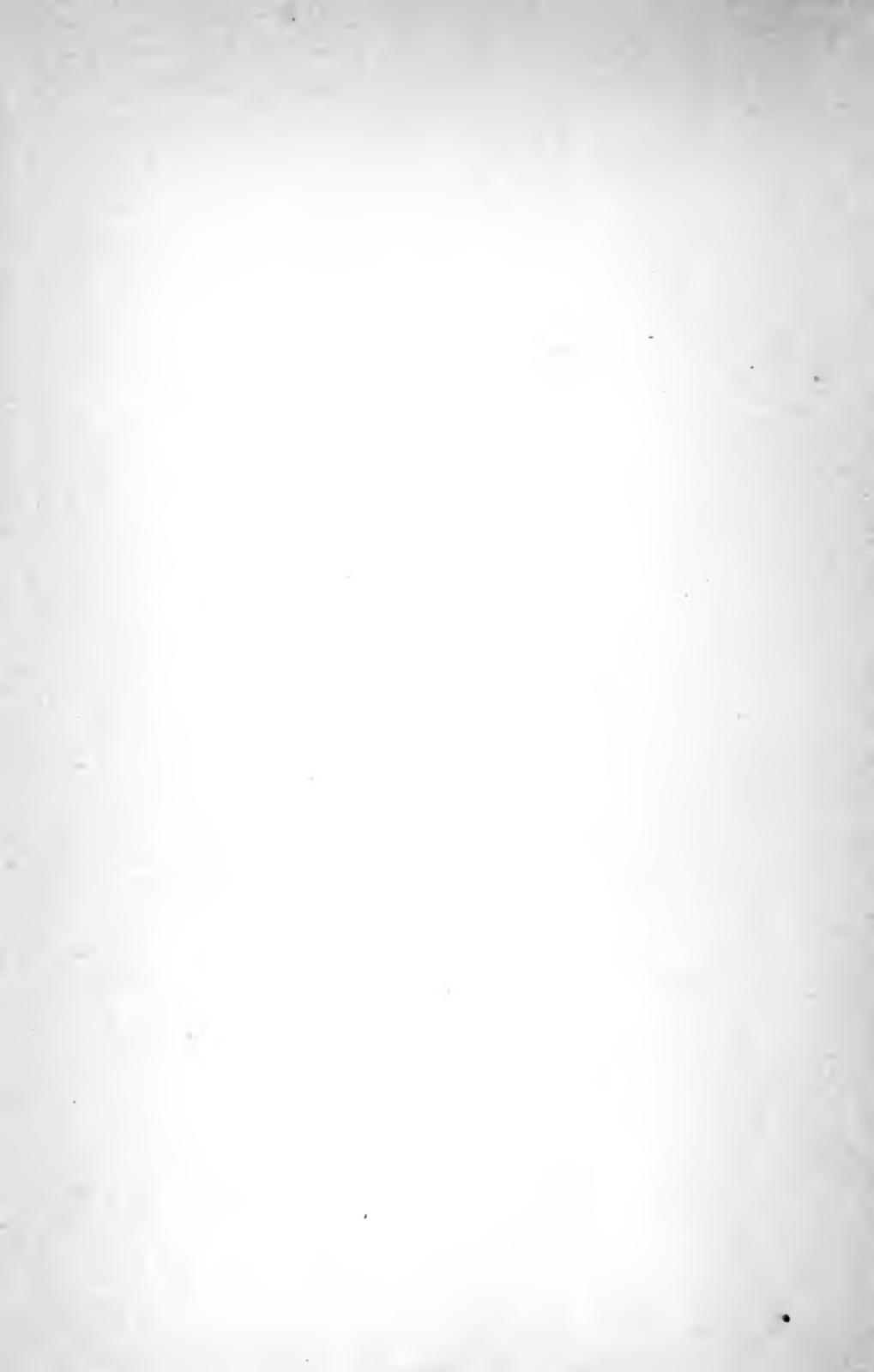
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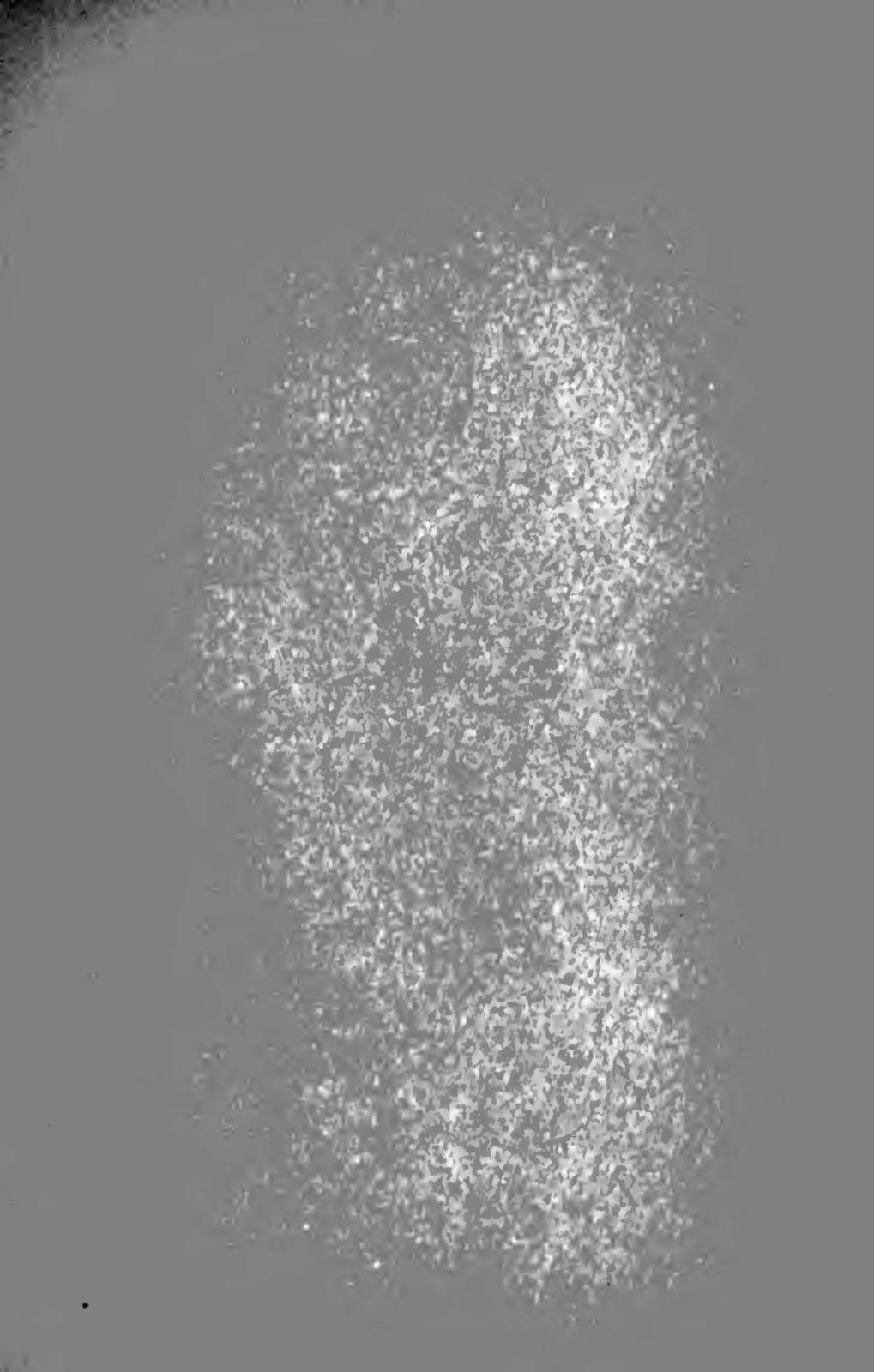
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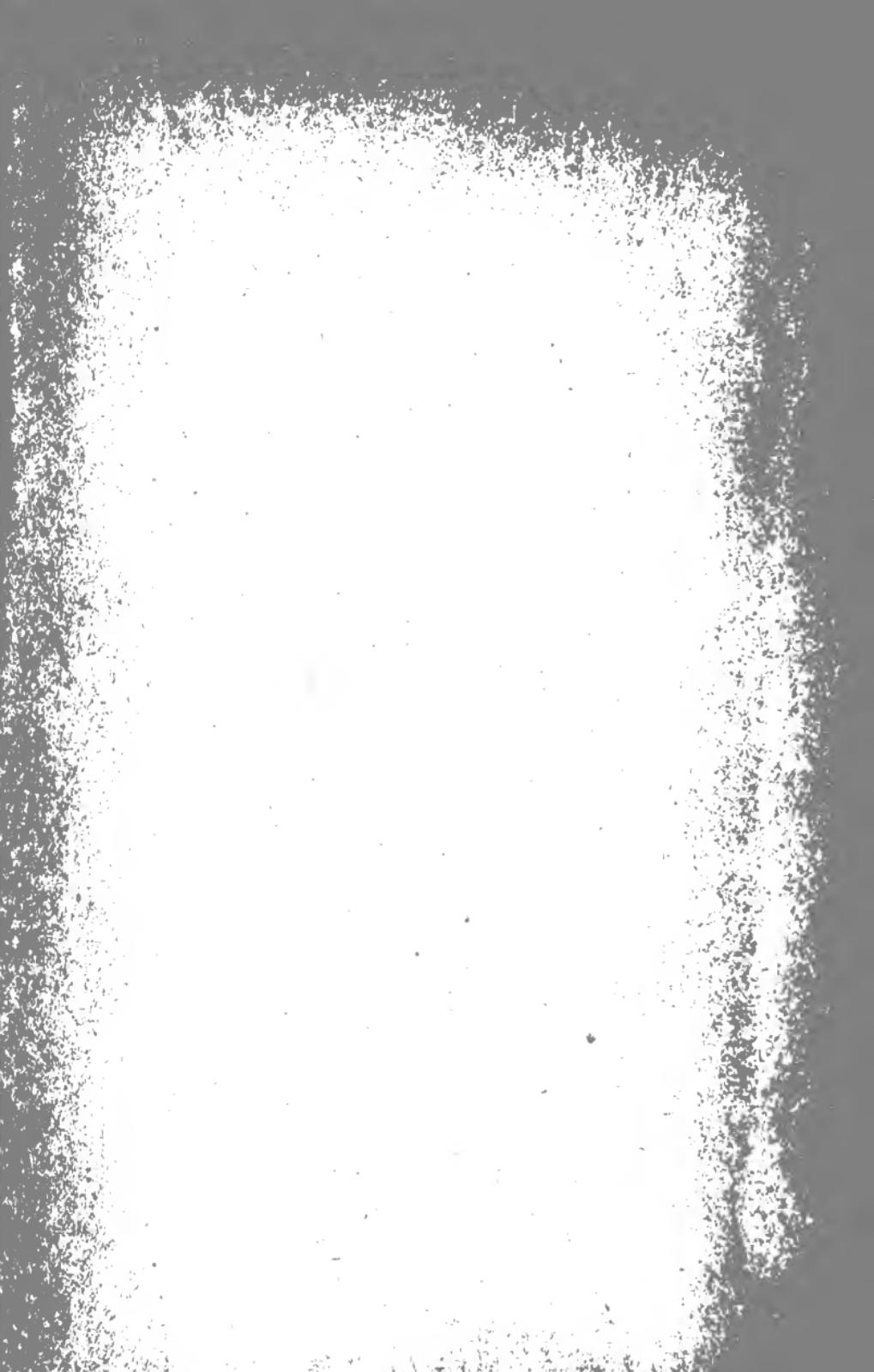
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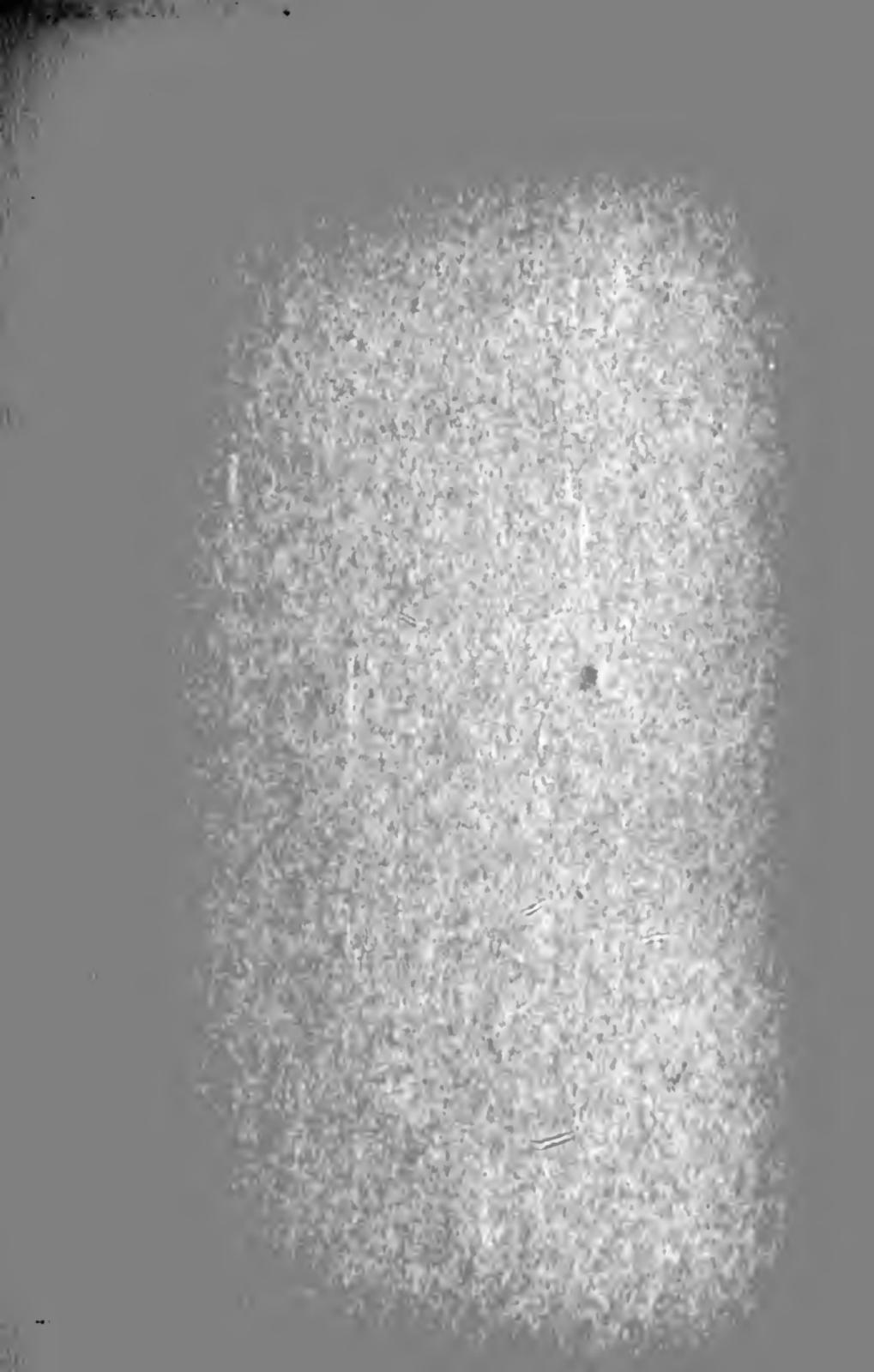
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